A Hundred Meditations on the Love of God

Southwell, S.J.

ST. JOSEPH'S ASCETICAL LIBRARY.

EDITED BY FATHERS S.J.

No. VI.

A HUNDRED MEDITATIONS ON THE LOVE OF GOD.

Robert Southwell.

Engraved by W. J. Alais from a Crayon drawing at Stonyhurst College by Charles Weld, Esq.re of Chidcock after the original at Friburg

A HUNDRED MEDITATIONS

ON THE

LOVE OF GOD.

By ROBERT SOUTHWELL,

PRIEST OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

Edited, with a Preface,

By JOHN MORRIS,

Priest of the same Society.

ALMA COLLEGE
246.722
LIBRARY
S689
Alma California

LONDON: BURNS AND OATES.

1873.

44510

PREFACE.

FOR the beautiful Frontispiece of this volume our readers are indebted to the generous kindness of the Reverend Alexander Grosart, of Blackburn. He has had it carefully engraved by Mr. Alais. The sketch was taken by Mr. Charles Weld from the original picture at Fribourg, and was given by him, with many others of great interest, to Stonyhurst College. The engraving accompanies Mr. Grosart's admirable edition of Father Southwell's Poetical Works, and he has had the goodness to place it at our disposal; judging that those who become the disciples of Father Southwell in the study of Divine Love, not less than those who regard him as a Master in poesy, will be glad to fix their eyes upon the face of their teacher. We owe great thanks to all who have helped to transmit to us the portrait of Robert Southwell.

In his biographical Introduction to the Poems, Mr. Grosart has so diligently collected together

the memorials that have come down to us of the life and death of Father Southwell, that it would be superfluous to attempt the same work in this place. It will be sufficient to remind the reader that Robert Southwell was one of that chosen band of heroes who braved the severity of the laws of Queen Elizabeth against the Catholic religion, and whose missionary work was soon crowned by martyrdom. After severe imprisonment and frequent torture, he was tried for the capital offence of being a Priest in England, and suffered at Tyburn on the 21st of February, 159$\frac{4}{5}$, in his thirty-fourth year.

In the following Meditations the love of Father Southwell for his Lord and Master has found expression. His heart was filled with it to overflowing, and its contemplation was evidently to him an inexhaustible delight. Those who familiarize themselves with the spirit breathed in these Meditations, will not be surprised that it should have been natural to him, when asked his age at his trial, to reply that "he was about the same age as our Saviour;" or that his address to the people from the scaffold should have been from the loving words of the Apostle, "Whether we live, we live to the Lord, or whether we die, we die to the Lord; therefore, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord."

The interest of these Meditations is greatly enhanced by the recollection that it is a Martyr, at whose intercourse with God we are present. It is a revelation to us of the interior union with God of a brave heart that aspired to and attained martyrdom. "'Love is strong as death,'" he quotes* from the Canticle, and adds, "Nay, it is stronger than death; for we see that where love and death bid defiance one to the other and enter into combat, love winneth the field and getteth the victory, as is evidently verified in the holy Martyrs; and so great was the force of the love which was encamped in the breasts of those invincible knights of Jesus Christ, that they set light by torments and feared not death, of which they obtained very glorious victories, because they rather chose to die than to leave that love which they bore unto God."

It is by the sword of sorrow that the thoughts of many hearts are revealed.† The prospect of martyrdom causes our "invincible knight of Jesus Christ" to open his own heart to us, and show us how he had beforehand counted the gravest cost of the Love of God. "Let tyrants use their cruelties, let the fire burn, let cruel torments be prepared, let swords and butcherly knives be whet and made sharp, let wild beasts roar and tear in pieces and devour, let them

* P. 292. † St. Luke ii. 35.

bring iron hatchets to open, rend, and pluck out their bowels, let them melt pitch and resin, and what else can be devised more terrible and fearful, and all this doth the great force of love overcome and vanquish."* Following the King of Martyrs, Robert Southwell went forth, "knowing all things that should come upon him."† It was love that united him to God and enabled him to say, "I shall now be able to fast by the power and virtue of His grace, to pardon injuries, watch in prayer, go in pilgrimage, keep perpetual chastity, yea, and to die, offering myself unto martyrdom as many holy Martyrs have done."‡ "O mighty fire!" was his prayer, the prayer that was gloriously answered, "And if it might please Thee, O Lord, to send it to my soul, how little would I esteem those things that now do trouble me," —"the fire of love so burning in those blessed breasts of the Martyrs, that, the more water of persecution they cast upon it, thinking to quench it, the more it flames."

In these Meditations, then, we see into a Martyr's heart, or rather, we see the thoughts by which the heart was made heroic and apt for the great sacrifice of martyrdom. It was filled with the love of God. Everything spoke to it of the love of God. It drew the love of God to

* P. 296. † St. John xviii. 4. ‡ P. 190.

itself from all around, and in its meditation all creatures, instead of weakening, helped to strengthen its love for God.

For instance, we can imagine to ourselves Father John Gerard, according to his own description,* instructing Father Southwell as they journeyed together on horseback, in the technical terms of hunting and hawking, in order that he might have some neutral ground on which to converse with Protestant gentlemen. For the purpose intended, Father Southwell used to complain that he was a poor pupil, but we may conceive that it was during one of these very lessons in falconry that his mind turned the suggested thoughts to our Lord, and that afterwards he worked what he heard into a Meditation. "When the eagle-falcon, ger-falcon, or any other kind of long-winged hawk, hath flown a high pitch, and skimming through the air hath mounted up to the clouds, and making the game to stoop seizeth on it; if she be rewarded with the heart or brains of the fowl, she holdeth herself satisfied. O princely Hawk, which camest down from Heaven into the bowels of the Blessed Virgin, and from her womb unto the earth, and from the earth into the desert, and from the desert to the Cross, and from the Cross unto hell, and from hell unto Heaven, and

* *Condition of Catholics under James I.*, p. xxiii.

madest those turnings to pursue our souls which Thou wert losing, and which without Thy helping hand had perished, is it much that Thou requirest our heart for reward of the travail and pains that Thou hast taken for us, and for satisfaction of all that Thou hast done to work our redemption? What hawk ever made such a brave flight, or lost so much blood in the pursuit of her game, as the salvation of our souls hath cost Thee, our God and our Lord?"*

It seems impossible for us to have said thus much of Robert Southwell's martyr spirit and final perseverance, and not to allude to the hope that in God's good time the Church may vindicate for him his claim to the public veneration of the Faithful. We may unite in prayer that God may hasten the day when the Martyrs to whom we owe our inheritance shall receive their honours from the Church to which they were loyal unto death. "Wherefore hath the Martyr a crown given him but for his victory? Wherefore doth Holy Church celebrate their conquests and crowns, but for the victories that they have obtained of tyrants, of themselves, of torments, of the fear of death, of death itself?"†

The manuscript from which we have printed is the property of Stonyhurst College, and it is

* P. 282. † P. 292.

probably the only copy extant. The transcriber's dedication to the Lady Beauchamp tells us that the copy was made by him from the Martyr's autograph. This Lady Beauchamp must have been Honora, the daughter of Sir Richard Rogers, of Brianston, co. Dorset, knight, wife of Edward, son (by Lady Catherine Grey, the sister of Lady Jane) of Edward Seymour, whose father, the Duke of Somerset, was beheaded by Edward VI., and who was created by Elizabeth, in the first year of her reign, Baron Beauchamp of Hacche and Earl of Hertford. Edward Seymour, commonly called Lord Beauchamp, died January 28, $16\frac{19}{20}$. As his father survived him, his widow was known by no other title than that of Lady Beauchamp. This lady may well have been a Catholic. It was probably for this reason that her husband's "alliance was so greatly disapproved by his father, that all that harmony which is necessary to the happiness of a family subsided between him and his son."* Lady Beauchamp's "holy mother," spoken of in the Dedication, was Cecilia, daughter of Sir Andrew Lutterel; and her grandmother was Lady Catherine Weston, daughter of the Earl of Portland, Lord Treasurer;† both of which families were thoroughly Catholic. The last

* Jacob's *Complete English Peerage*, 1766, p. 151.
† Hutchin's *Dorset*, vol. i., p. 153.

male heir of her father's name was her nephew Richard, of whose devotion to the royal cause, Lord Clarendon speaks* in the highest terms of praise. "In the Marquis of Hertford's first entrance into the west [1643], he had an unspeakable loss, and the King's service a far greater, by the death of Mr. Rogers, a gentleman of a rare temper and excellent understanding, who besides that he had a great interest in the Marquis, being his cousin-german, and so out of that private relation as well as zeal to the public, passionately inclined to advance the service, had a wonderful great influence upon the county of Dorset." Further research may, perhaps, bring to light fuller traces of the Catholicity of Honora, Lady Beauchamp. The dedication to her of this transcript has served to disclose it.

* Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*, fol. ed., Oxford, 1707, vol. ii., p. 212.

CONTENTS.

		Page
PREFACE		v
TRANSCRIBER'S DEDICATION		xix
Chap.		
1.	How everything created inviteth to the love of the Creator	1
2.	How all things send us to the love of God	5
3.	How God ought to be beloved for Himself	9
4.	That God ought to be beloved for that He is the chief good	14
5.	How God ought to be beloved for that He is of all things most beautiful	19
6.	How and in what manner God ought to be beloved	22
7.	How God ought only to be beloved	27
8.	How God ought to be beloved because He is the centre of our soul	30
9.	How love carrieth us to God as to our centre	35
10.	How the soul resteth not but only in God as in her centre	40
11.	How we ought to love God because He loveth us	45
12.	How we ought to love God because He first loved us	50
13.	How the love that God beareth us is eternal and as ancient as Himself	55

Chap.		*Page*
14.	From whence the love that Christ beareth us doth proceed	60
15.	Of the beginning and cause of the love of Jesus Christ	65
16.	That the love of Christ is without end	69
17.	Of the example of love which our Saviour gave us at His death	73
18.	How the Cross of Christ inflameth our souls in love	77
19.	How God ought to be beloved for that He is our Benefactor	83
20.	That God ought to be beloved for the benefits that He bestoweth on us	88
21.	That God ought to be beloved because He is our rest	94
22.	Of the benefit that God hath bestowed on us in giving us His Son	98
23.	Of the love that God bore us in giving us His Son	102
24.	How great was the love in giving us Himself	108
25.	Of the excellency of the love of God	112
26.	Of the benefit of the Incarnation of Christ	117
27.	Of the benefit of our redemption	122
28.	Of the love of our redemption	127
29.	Of the love for which Christ offered Himself for our redemption	132
30.	Of the love of God in giving us Himself for food	138
31.	How God, in the Sacrament of the altar, hath satisfied this love that He bore us	143
32.	How God showed us His love at the time that He instituted this Sacrament	148
33.	Of the love and preparation wherewith we ought to receive this Sacrament	154
34.	Of the benefit of Creation	160
35.	Of the benefit of conservation	165
36.	Of the benefits bestowed on our body	170
37.	Of the goods of nature bestowed on our soul	176

Chap.		Page
38.	Of the benefit of grace given unto our souls	182
39.	Of the benefit of this divine grace and love	186
40.	Of the evils from which God hath delivered us	191
41.	Of the goods that are promised unto us	197
42.	How love is the foundation of all the benefits of God	203
43.	Of the commandment of the love of God	208
44.	That God commandeth us to love Him for to enrich us	214
45.	That God commandeth us to love because He would have us to live	220
46.	How the love of God is the life of our souls	226
47.	That God commandeth us to love Him for to give us a quiet life	231
48.	How the love of God maketh all things sweet	236
49.	That God commandeth us to love Him for to honour us	242
50.	What is meant by the commandment of the love of God	247
51.	How the commandment of the love of God is the greatest and chief commandment	252
52.	How God ought to be beloved for that He is our Lord	258
53.	How God ought to be beloved for that He is God	264
54.	How God ought to be beloved because He is ours	269
55.	How God ought to beloved with all our heart	275
56.	How God requireth the inward part of our soul	281
57.	How God is to be beloved because He is our strength	286
58.	Of the great force of the love of God	292
59.	How all men are able to love God	297
60.	How we cannot pay God with anything but with love	303
61.	How God requireth us only to love Him	308
62.	How love is paid with nothing but with love only	313
63.	How man hath properly nothing of his own but love	318
64.	How we ought to love God as He loveth us	324

Chap.		*Page*
65.	How God loveth us	329
66.	How God loveth us in particular	335
67.	Of the indissoluble knot of the love of God	340
68.	How the love of God is the bond of perfection	346
69.	Of the benefits that proceed of this bond of love	352
70.	How the love of God is delectable and pleasant	357
71.	How the love of God is the gift of Heaven	363
72.	How the Heavenly gift of love is gotten and preserved	368
73.	How we cannot love God and the world together	373
74.	Of the degrees of Heavenly love	379
75.	Of the properties of the love of God	385
76.	How the love of God transformeth the lover into the beloved	391
77.	How the love of God inflameth our souls in the desire of Heavenly things	397
78.	How this life is painful to one that loveth God	402
79.	How love is showed by works	408
80.	How the love of God giveth the merit to our works	414
81.	Of the end of a true lover of God	419
82.	Of the good success that followeth the true lovers of God	425
83.	How God calleth us to love Him	431
84.	How love carrieth us unto God	437
85.	How the love of God awakeneth our memory	443
86.	How the love of God draweth us to the knowledge of Him	448
87.	How the knowledge of God bringeth us to His love	454
88.	That love aspireth to seek out and deserve great things	460
89.	That he who loveth not God, offereth injury unto Him and hurteth himself	466
90.	Of the contrariety that is between the love of God and self-love	471

Chap. *Page*

91. Of the fruits and profit of the love of God, and of the hurt and damage of self-love 478
92. How the shortness of this life inviteth us to the love of God 484
93. How we ought to love God for His long sufferance of us 490
94. That God ought to be beloved for that He is our faithful friend 496
95. How God ought to be beloved for that He is our defence and refuge 502
96. That God ought to be beloved for that He is our refuge 508
97. That God ought to be beloved because He is our deliverer 514
98. How God ought to be beloved because He is our fulness and satiety 521
99. How we ought to love God in the behalf and in respect of His creatures 527
100. Of the glory that they shall obtain who love God . 532

TRANSCRIBER'S DEDICATION.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE AND VIRTUOUS LADY, THE LADY BEAUCHAMP.

NOBLE LADY,—Having long had in my custody the original of these ensuing discourses, written with Mr. Robert Southwell's own hand (a gentleman for his holy life and happy death of eternal memory), and knowing certainly that he especially wrote and meant to have printed them for your holy mother's devotion, singularly by him honoured and affected, I have, in an eminent esteeem which I profess myself to have of your virtuous and noble worth, moved also thereunto by one of your noblest and nearest kinswomen, presumed to make your honour partaker of such a treasury of devout discourses, apt if you will be pleased, after your studious and attentive manner, to read them, to raise your soul to holy cogitations and fervorous desires of loving Him Who, being in Himself essential and infinite goodness, hath, as the whole discourse of this book declareth, to deserve our love, communicated the same infinitely and after innumerable manners unto us, in Whom I wish your honour temporal graces and eternal happiness.

A HUNDRED MEDITATIONS ON THE LOVE OF GOD.

FIRST MEDITATION.

HOW EVERYTHING CREATED INVITETH TO THE LOVE OF THE CREATOR.

ALL Thy creatures, O Lord, do invite me to love Thee, and in every one of them I see, as it were, a tongue that publishes Thy goodness and greatness. The beauty of the heavens, the clearness of the sun and moon, the glistening of the stars, the brightness of the planets, the running streams of water, the greenness of the fields, the diversity of flowers, the variety of colours, and all that ever Thy divine goodness hath framed, O God of my heart and Spouse of my soul, do say unto me that I should love Thee. All that ever I behold, inviteth me to Thy love, and blameth me when I love Thee not. I cannot open my eyes without seeing preachers of Thine exceeding high wisdom, nor open my ears without hearing publishers of Thy goodness: for all

that Thou hast made doth tell me, O Lord, what Thou art; all things created do show the love of the Creator. The Scripture saith, speaking of the creation of the world, that the Spirit of our Lord did walk upon the waters, as if it were the mind of some singular workman discoursing many ways how of a massive lump of gold to frame or draw out some curious image, or other exquisite piece of workmanship. Whereby we are given to understand, that His divine love went swimming over all things, and with a sweet love doth still maintain, and hold and govern them. Everything springeth of the lively fountain of love, and all that hath being is beautified with love, and that in such sort, that if the sight of our soul were not blinded with the dross and lust of her own passions and self-love, the first thing that in all things she could see should be the love of the Creator.

Hereupon it cometh to pass that Thy friends, O Lord, with greater skill and cunning than that famous philosopher, Pireclas, who first taught to strike fire out of a flint stone, out of every creature, be it never so small, do strike sparks of love; for if the earth do yield me sustenance, and serve me with her fruits, Thy holy love is the good and careful gardener which once so commanded, when it first created it; if the air refresh me and give me life, Thy love so commanded it, for that of itself, as being a second cause, it could do nothing; if the water serve us and yield us fish, and run violently into the sea, from whence it cometh, all is to accomplish Thy commandment of love; finally, if the fire give heat, if the heavens give light and influence, creating divers kinds

of metals in the earth, all is for the service of me, which that infinite love of our God hath created here on earth.

What else, O Lord, are the elements, birds, beasts, heavens and planets, but flaming firebrands wherewith Thou hast enkindled my frozen heart, to dispose it to love Thee, Who sendeth it so many gifts to make it a perfect lover? What else are the sun, moon, heaven and earth, but jewels to intimate to us Thy exceeding great love and goodwill? Every morning thou findest, O my soul, at the gate of thy house, the whole world, birds, beasts, the fields, and the heavens, attending to serve thee, that thou for them all mightest discharge the service of free love, which thou alone, instead of them all, dost owe to thy Creator and theirs. All things do awaken thee to the love of thy God, and all things, as a proctor of their Lord, do make at thy hands a demand of love.

There invites thee to this love a wonderful noise of all His creatures, both superior and inferior, which with plain and manifest speeches do declare unto thee His majesty and greatness. "The heavens, O Lord, do declare Thy glory, and the firmament showeth the works of Thy hands,"* and there are neither speeches nor languages whereof their voices are not heard, insomuch that all men are inexcusable.†

The heavens, O Lord, holding their peace, do show forth Thy glory, and do tell us what manner of place that same shall be of thine Elect, seeing Thou sufferest the eyes of mortal man to behold such beauty. Oh, how rich art Thou, O my God,

* Psalm xviii. 1. † Rom. i. 20.

Who art served with such wonderful lamps! By what plot could such an excellent piece of work be framed? Who had been able to make such a beautiful brightness, such diverse influences, such contrary motions, without erring in any one point?

Great reason had Job to demand and say, "Who shall be able to show the order of the heavens and declare their motion?"* O lumpish heart of mine, how chanceth it that the desire to see such excellency and greatness lifteth thee not up to those heavenly tabernacles? "Oh, how great is the house of our Lord, and how large without measure is the place of His habitation!"†

"I will behold the heavens, the works of Thy fingers, and the moon and the stars, which Thou hast created."‡ And all that ever I can see doth invite me to love Thee. For if I turn my eyes to this little world, which is man, and look well on myself, here find I great cause to love Thee, seeing all the aforesaid Thou hast created for my service and commodity. If I open mine ears I shall hear the Psalmist, who sayeth unto me, "In myself I know Thy wonderful science: of the knowledge of myself cometh the knowledge of Thine exceeding high wisdom;" and hereupon said the Prophet Isaias unto sinners, "Turn ye transgressors unto your heart, in yourselves you shall see Who is your God."§

* Job xxxviii. 33. † Baruch iii. 24. ‡ Psalm viii. 4. § Isaias xlvi. 8.

SECOND MEDITATION.

HOW ALL THINGS SEND US TO THE LOVE OF GOD.

ALL that ever I behold with my eyes doth pass me over, and sendeth me unto Thee, my God and my Lord, and all that ever Thou hast created doth serve me to know Thy divine greatness. Like as an arrow stayeth not in the air, but flieth forward towards the mark that it is shot at, so ought our considerations and thoughts not to be settled upon earthly things, but upon the end and last scope, which is Thou, my God.

All these things which we see are but, as it were, a means to consider the Creator. "The Spirit of our Lord filled the circuit of the earth, and He which containeth all things hath science of voice."* He is stark blind, who is not lightened with so many clear lights of things created; he is deaf, who with so many clamours and noises awakes not; he is dumb, that with so many effects praises not God; and he is an arrant fool who with so many evident demonstrations knoweth not the first beginning and cause of all.

Look up, therefore, with thine eyes, O my soul, listen with thy spiritual ears, open thy lips, and offer up thy heart, that thou mayest hear Him, praise Him, love Him, and extol Him, that the whole circuit of the earth may not rise and rebel against thee.† For not doing this, the earth sigheth against fools, and

* Wisdom i. 7. † Wisdom v. 18.

contrariwise, the performance thereof shall be an occasion of glory to the wise, who may say with the Prophet, "Thou hast delighted me, O Lord, in the things that Thou hast made, and I will take pleasure in the works of Thy hands."* "Oh, how wonderfully great are Thy works, O Lord, Thou hast done all things wisely, and the earth is full of Thy possession."†

I behold in every creature, as it were in a glass, the omnipotence of Thee, my God. There shineth in the creatures, as it were in a glass, the majesty of the Creator. The senses are the gate of the imagination, and with the senses we behold the creatures, by knowledge whereof we come to know the goodness and wisdom of the Creator. Ezechiel, going about to describe the building of the Church, began first with the walls without;‡ before that my soul mount up to the consideration of the infinite perfections which are in Thee, my God, I will lift up my heart to Thy holy love, drawn on and allured with these outward things that I behold with mine eyes, for these do carry me to the knowledge of Thee.

"Woe be to you who look not upon that which God doth, or consider not the works of His hands,"§ sayeth the Prophet Isaias. By the works many times are known the workmen that wrought them, although we see them not with our corporal eyes. The images of Phydias, that excellent carver, did show what he was, and many knew him who had never seen him.

* Psalm xci. 5. † Psalm ciii. 24. ‡ Ezechiel xl. 5.
§ Isaias v. 12.

And Protagines, likewise, knew that notable painter, Angelo, by a line that he drew.

O Creator of all things, what image is there that doth so plainly show what Thou art as I do? What lines can be so artificially curiously wrought with the hand of any skilful workman or excellent painter that can come near, or be any ways compared to the excellency and wonderful beauty of the brightness of the sky and flowers of the field; but if we behold the order, harmony, and concord of this world, what excuse canst thou allege, O my soul, not to be presently lifted up, and wholly fixed unto thy God? This is such a tunable music, with such a wonderful concord and proportion, that if thou wert not deaf, it would make thee forget all things created, and be transformed into thy Creator. Every string of this instrument soundeth sweetly, but they all together do make a most pleasant and heavenly melody. Every creature by itself alone representeth unto us Thy infinite power and unspeakable goodness, but all jointly considered with the order of the whole world do put me in wonderful admiration that "with Thy order, the day persevereth, for that all things serve Thee."* When some excellent musician tuneth the discordant notes of the strings of his instrument, a man will judge him skilful in his art, although he see him not.

If thou behold and consider well, O my soul, all things created, thou shalt find a marvellous consonance in things that are contrary one to the other; for the elements, being of contrary qualities, strive not one against the other, nor inferior things against

* Psalm cxviii. 91.

the superior, but all agree sweetly together and make a music of inestimable proportion and concord, the hand of that infinite wisdom of thy God playing on them. This Lord holdeth all things created as a spoil, joineth heavenly things with earthly things, and universal with particular things.

Now, beholding this dispersion of things so well ordered and disposed, I come to ponder in my mind those words of the Wise Man, who saith, "He is much more beautiful that made this."* Oh, how much more beautiful must He needs be, seeing that the Author of beauty planted it all. Oh, what manner of providence must He needs have, Who in such a multitude of things hath for every particular so abundantly provided, as though He were God but for one thing only; from whence are derived the colours of the herbs, the sweetness of flowers and fruits, the painted hues of the birds, and the beauties of the world. Oh, what great power must He needs be of, Who made all this of nothing; and how wise must He be Who hath given such divers subtleties to beasts; so many sorts of wit unto men, all which jointly together in comparison of Him are, as it were, nothing.

Arise up therefore, O my soul, open thine eyes and awake; and if the dimness of thy sight will not permit thee to see the divine power that worketh these things, behold at least His works, which declare what He is that made them, that thereby He may be known Who cannot be comprehended. Hereupon saidst Thou, O Lord, to certain blind men who, having Thee before them, knew Thee not, "If you

* Wisdom xiii. 4.

believe not Me, believe My works."* They told what Thou wert if they had eyes to consider them, and as it would be impossible to consider them and not to know Thee, so is it impossible to know Thee and cease for to love Thee.

THIRD MEDITATION.

HOW GOD OUGHT TO BE BLESSED FOR HIMSELF.

IT is wonderful perverseness to enjoy those things which we ought but to use, and to use those things which we ought to enjoy. To enjoy is to love a thing for itself, and to use is to love it not for itself, but for love of some other thing. Evil is he who useth the Creator and enjoyeth the creature; he loveth God not for Himself, but in some other respect, and for the good that he hopeth for at His hands, and he loveth the creature simply for love of itself. Such a man is an offender and breaker of the law, and perverteth the due order of love. Unworthy is he of God, Who loveth things that are His more than Himself. Love hath its end, and the last end is that which we do truly love, and all other means we use, loving them not for themselves but because they are profitable helps for attaining the last end, wherein love resteth and reposeth.

What greater injury, then, O my soul, canst thou offer to thy God than to love His gifts more than this thy Creator. If thou lovest not God for Himself, but

* St. John x. 38.

for that which He giveth thee, or for that which thou hopest for at His hands, dost thou not prefer and make more account of the gift than of the Giver? Great injury doth the spouse to the bridegroom when she esteemeth his jewels and presents more than his person; thy Bridegroom is good, and worthy to be beloved for Himself. Many love other men, not for their wealth or credit, nor for the goods that they possess, they themselves having greater store and abundance of these things than those that they love, but they love them for that they are honest and of sweet conversation; and wherefore then, O Lord, shall not I deal with Thee as one man dealeth with another, and love Thee for that which Thou art, without seeking my own private profit? I love Thee as much as I can, and all that possibly I am able, and yet for all this I am discontented with the little that I love Thee, for I would willingly have an infinite power infinitely for to love Thee.

Put the case, though it is impossible, that I might be in glory enjoying the sight of Thy divine essence, and yet have Thy displeasure, or, burn in hell, and suffer all the pains that the damned souls do, remaining in Thy friendship: I would rather choose to be tormented in the bottomless pit of hell, enjoying Thy divine favour, than to possess Thy glory and have Thy displeasure. All my glory is to have Thee contented, and my hell to have Thee offended with me. Grant me, O Lord, Thy favour and grace, and do with me whatsoever it shall please Thee. Give me Thy holy love, and dispose of me according to Thy holy will; which, if it be that I suffer all the torments of hell, therein will I

be, as it were, in Paradise, seeing that therein I serve Thee and do Thy will. If I abhor that cursed place, it is not so much for the pains that I fear, as because I know that all that be therein are Thine enemies; yet again, if I love the eternal bliss and heavenly glory, I desire it not so much for my delight and pleasure, as because I know that all such as enjoy Thee there are Thy friends, and are secure and certain never to offend Thee.

This only doth my soul desire, never to displease Thee, and always to persevere in Thy holy love. Assure me of Thy friendship, and dispatch me which way Thou pleasest; for having Thee present with me, it shall be sufficient to cause me never to be pensive or sorrowful, nor to be angry at anything that shall happen unto me. Thee only I desire, and Thee only I love. It is most pleasant unto me to come nigh unto Thee, and this alone sufficeth me.

Oh, how sweet, O Lord, is Thy Spirit, and how worthy art Thou to be loved for Thyself. A slave and vile mercenary is he that seeketh any other thing beside Thee. Art Thou of so small value, being the chief felicity and infinite goodness, that Thou deservest not to be loved for Thyself, but for that which Thou hast, and art able to give us; insomuch, O Lord, that if Thou hadst nothing to give us, Thou shouldst not be loved of us? Oh, how great injury doth he unto Thee who serveth Thee and keepeth Thy commandments, not so much for love of Thee, nor for that Thou commandest it, as for his own particular commodity!

After that Moses, in Deuteronomy, had commanded

that we should love Thee, he added, saying, "Thou art to love thy Lord so as He hath commanded thee to do." Whereby he giveth us to understand that the cause and chief reason wherefore men ought to love Thee, is because Thou commandest it, and wouldst have it so: and not for the good that we hope for at Thy hands, nor because Thou threatenest torments to such as love Thee not, but principally because Thou commandest it: and seeing that it is Thy will that we love Thee, for that cause only we ought for to love Thee. He Who saith that he loveth Thee and keepeth the Ten Commandments of Thy law only or principally that Thou mayest give him Thy glory, let him be sure that he loveth Thee not and shall never come near it. Such a one is not guided aright by Thy holy law, but is carried away with self-love, and seeketh his own commodity.

If a son should say unto his father that he obeyeth him, and doeth all that he commandeth him, not because he is his father nor for the love that he beareth him, but only to be his heir and to inherit after him, deserveth not such a son that his father should disinherit him, thrust him out of his house, and prefer that son who loveth and serveth him without respect of profit? For whom doth the father mean his goods, but for the son that loveth him? And for whom intendest Thou, my God, Thy glory, but for those that love Thee? The Apostle saith, "The eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, neither shall it enter into the heart of man, what God hath prepared for such as love Him."* Everlasting life is for those

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

that love Thee, and he shall be disinherited thereof who, loving not God, seeketh God not for God, but only for His glory. For those that love Thee, O Lord, Thou reservest Thy bliss, and the children that serve Thee for love shall enter into it. He who seeketh Thee alone shall find thee, and with Thee shall possess all good. Thee alone I love and desire, and Thou alone shall be the reward of my labours, according to that which Thou saidst unto the Patriarch Abraham, "I am thy reward, great and copious."* Thou art that abundant great reward whereof the Prophet David, talking with Thee, saith in his Psalm, "Incline my heart to do Thy justifications for love of reward."†

Thou oughtest freely, O my soul, to love Him Who hath freely bought thee, giving the price of thy redemption without any desert of thine to be redeemed. Desire thou nothing else besides, seeing He alone is sufficient for thee. How covetous soever thou art, thou oughtest to content thyself with Him alone, although thy greedy desire would seek to possess Heaven and earth. In Him alone thou shalt have as much as thou canst desire, and all that thou canst imagine. "Pardon, O Lord, Thy people," saith Moses unto God, "or blot me out of the book of life."‡ Moses desired not to be separated from the love of God; but so exceedingly he loved God and his neighbours, that for the love of them he would be deprived of glory, which was his own profit and commodity, and content himself only with the love of God.

* Gen. xv. 1. † Psalm cxviii. 112. ‡ Exodus xxxii. 32.

FOURTH MEDITATION.

THAT GOD OUGHT TO BE BELOVED FOR THAT HE IS THE CHIEF GOOD.

IF the object of our will be the true and perfect good, or else that which is good in show and appearance, O most excellent good and infinite goodness of my God, wherefore shall not my heart love Thee above all things, seeing that Thou art the chief good and goodness itself? It is impossible for a man to love anything, unless it be either good in deed or bear a show of some goodness. When he loveth that which is evil, he loveth it not in that it is evil, but because the evil cometh masked with the vizard of some good, with which bait the will, being allured, is deceitfully carried away to desire the evil which our will would never love if it came plainly as it is, the show of evil.

The world representeth to our will things that are good in show, as delights, honours, temporal profits, and such like, under which transitory and counterfeit good lieth hidden death for offence with the abominations of vices and sins. Thus art thou cozened, O my soul, when setting thy affection upon one of these external vanities, thou buyest, at a dear price with loss of thy liberty, eternal and everlasting torments. I know not what manner of prevarications and peevishness this is, seeing that to love that which is good being as natural unto thee as for the fire to burn, thou leavest and forsakest thy God, Who is absolutely good. A mere act of goodness, as that is which

showeth in the creatures the goodness of the Creator, is no more but a little drop which distilleth from that infinite sea and huge bottomless pit of the unspeakable goodness of the Creator. Wherefore, then, dost thou leave the thing that is in deed, for that it only seemeth to be, the lively body for the painted picture, and that which is perfectly good for a shadow of good?

Under this small goodness that thou beholdest in creatures, which they have borrowed of the exceeding great goodness of the Creator, there lie hidden many imperfections; but the goodness of our Lord is properly His own without mixture of any imperfection: and what peevishness, then, is this of thine, that leaving that which is substantially and essentially good and so worthy to be loved for that it is goodness itself, thou runnest after a little good of small continuance, which carrieth many faults and defects most worthy to be abhorred. "There is none good, but God,"* saith the Scripture, for that He alone is substantially good, and His goodness is natural unto Him, and proper unto His essence: but the goodness of the creature is gotten, received, and borrowed, and very superficial, and is not good of itself, but only by participation, which is by the goodness that it hath received of God.

Thee therefore, my God, Who art the beginning and fountain from whence proceed all those good things that I love here on earth—Thee, I say, let my soul love above all things, seeing that naturally she cannot desire, nor be carried away but with that which is good in deed, or good in show and appear-

* St. Matt. xix. 17; St. Luke xviii. 19.

ance. Thee, O Lord, Who art the chief good and true goodness, ought I to love, seeing Thou art all good, and the centre of my soul, the end of all my desires, the rest of my heart, and the accomplishing of all my will. Thou art essentially good, and all other goodness is but accessory and unworthy, whereon I should employ my love.

Thou commandedst Thy servant Moses,* that he should make a propitiatory, which was a table round and great, of fine massy gold, without any manner of painting, which stood upon the ark of the testament, between two cherubim which held it, from whence Thou gavest Thine answers. If, as the holy Apostle saith, all the ceremonies of that law were a figure of the law of grace,† what doth that table of pure gold signify but Thy pure, sound, substantial, and true goodness? Goodness in us is, as it were, a gilded skin placed upon many defects and imperfections; but in that all is fine gold, for that Thou art wholly, essentially good. Painting is a thing very accidental and external, and therefore Thou commandedst that that table should not be painted, for that there is nothing in Thee accidental, no not Thy goodness, which belongeth properly unto Thee of Thine own nature. It was great and broad, for that Thy great goodness extendeth unto strangers, and infidels, and unto Thine enemies. "The sun riseth for the good and the evil; and Thou sendest the rain to fall upon the just and unjust."‡ Thou rejectedst not the thief that called upon Thee on the Cross, nor despisedst

* Exodus xxv. 17. † 1 Cor. x. 6, 11.
‡ St. Matt. v. 45.

the sinful woman which sought Thee out in the house of the Pharisee. Thou hidst not Thyself from the adulteress whom they brought before Thee in the Temple, and disdainedst not to receive sinners, and to eat and drink with them, notwithstanding all the murmuring of the Pharisees. Thou art no acceptor of persons, neither cometh there unto Thee any sinner, how great soever he be, who findeth not Thy bowels of love wide open to help and to cure him.

Let them, O Lord, complain of Thee and of Thine exceeding goodness who, seeking Thee in their troubles and adversities, have not found Thee a gentle and merciful Father to help and succour them. Oh, how large and wide in compass is Thy goodness, Lord, seeing Thou embracest the poor, and the slave, the vile, miserable servant, and wretched sinner, as well as the great, mighty, and rich, and him that hath profitted and proceeded far forth in Thy service.

There were two cherubim which beheld and looked upon the propitiatory, to signify that the two natures only, angelical and human, do know thee, and the Angels and men only have knowledge of Thy infinite goodness. They had their wings spread abroad that, in consideration and contemplation of Thy goodness, our desires might be kindled, and our soul might extend her affections, flying aloft with her holy exercises and fervent sighs, the will loving that above all things which the understanding knoweth worthy to be best beloved. For as all that is seen is seen by the light, and therefore the light itself is most visible, and all that is understood is by means of truth understood, and therefore is truth most intellec-

tible: so all that is beloved is by reason of some good that it containeth beloved, and therefore is goodness itself worthy to be beloved.

Then seeing Thou, O Lord, art goodness itself, by reason of Thy goodness, Thou deservest above all things to be beloved. "I will love Thee, O Lord my strength, my stay, my refuge, and my deliverer."* Thou art more and of more value in Thyself than all that ever Thou has done for us, and therefore it is meet my heart love Thee for Thy infinite goodness, and that more than for all that which Thou hast done for me besides.

Thou oughtest, then, my soul, to dive into that bottomless sea, and to enter into that infinite depth of the exceeding goodness of thy God and Creator. My heart burneth in this fiery furnace of the immeasurable charity of Thee, my God, and my bowels consume to ashes, inflamed with the love of Thy eternal and exceeding great goodness. I will love Thee, my God, infinite bliss, unspeakable goodness, and love without end or measure, as much as I am able, and above all things, seeing that Thou art the chiefest good and the fountain from whence all the good that other things have do flow and proceed.

* Psalm xvii. 1.

FIFTH MEDITATION.

HOW GOD OUGHT TO BE BELOVED, FOR THAT HE IS OF ALL THINGS MOST BEAUTIFUL.

IF beauty be a thing of such force as to steal and draw unto it the wills of men, why art thou not enamoured, O my heart, of that immeasurable beauty of thy Creator? That fountain of all beauty out of which all other beauties proceed; wherefore am not I wholly carried away with the marvellous perfection of such excellent and singular beauty? The beauty of creatures is but small, transitory, and of short continuance, and quickly decaying; fresh to-day, like the flowers of the field, and to-morrow withered like hay. The beauty of the creature fadeth and faileth when it should do most good, but the beauty of the Creator continueth for ever and so long as Himself.

All beauty, compared with the beauty of our Lord, is but loathsome sluttishness; and wherefore, then, dost thou stay thyself, O my soul, in the love of the deceitful filthiness of the creature, covered with a counterfeit show of beauty, and leavest the true beauty of thy God? The beauty of the Creator doth far more without comparison excel that of the creature than the body doth excel the shadow. If the shadow do so much invite thee to love it, why doth not the clear light win thy heart to desire it? If thou dost so greatly admire their works whereof thou canst not rightly discern the perfection they had in their first pattern, by reason of the filthiness of the subject wherein they are wrought, how is it that thou art not,

as it were, beside thyself, contemplating the beauty and perfection that they had in the original out of which they were taken?

What man is there in the world who, falling in liking with the beautiful picture of any body, be it never so naturally drawn and likely painted, would not much more be in love with the person itself? If all creatures, then, be pictures of the hand of Thee, my God, and man is Thy image and likeness,* wherefore, O Lord, should I not bear far greater affection unto Thee than to Thy image and picture? And if I do so carefully love the things which, being compared with the nobleness of my soul, the greatest good that they have is that they are desired by me, wherefore love I not Him without Whom there is no good thing, and Who created all these things for the love of me?

My heart shall be enamoured of the infinite beauty of my God. O beauty, so old and so new, how long was it ere I knew Thee, and how late ere I loved Thee! Art thou not haply the same, O Lord, of Whom the Psalmist saith that "Thou art beautiful among the sons of men?"† Of Thee the Spouse saith that "Thou art white and red, picked out amongst thousands;"‡ and although in this vale of banishment I cannot behold the beauty of Thy Divine Majesty in that manner as Thou art beautiful in Heaven, yet, by the effects, I come to the knowledge of the cause, and by the beauty of the heavens, planets, trees, flowers, and variety of the very lively colours of things that Thy divine hands have framed,

* Gen. i. 26. † Psalm xliv. 3. ‡ Cant. v. 10.

I know my God and my Lord to be a bottomless sea of beauty, and the beauty from whence their beauties do take their beginning.

If, then, by any means we come to the knowledge of Thy divine beauty, Who art the beginning and first cause of all that is beautiful, wherefore doth not the knowledge of my judgment and reason violently draw me with all speed and carry me to the love of such excellent perfection and beauty? The brave attire of fair Judith enamoured the Prince Holofernes.* The beauty of Esther appeased the wrath of King Assuerus.† The beauty of the forbidden tree made Eve to forget herself and the commandment that Thou gavest her.‡ And why shall not I then forget myself and all worldly things for the love of this infinite beauty, seeing that such a temporal beauty as was that of the tree caused our first mother clean to forget Thee?

This temporal beauty, saith the Scripture, is vanity, for that it so quickly deceiveth him that loveth it; but the eternal beauty which is proper to Thee, and to none else but unto Thee, my God, shall endure so long as Thou endureth, which shall be for evermore without end. Jonas did recreate himself under a green ivy-tree, which, being gnawn by a worm, dried up forthwith. Dryness and filthy corruption is annexed to all corporal beauty, as is that of the creature. To whom, then, is my soul to cleave and yield itself, and upon whom is my heart to employ its love, but upon this everlasting and infinite beauty, which shall never decay nor wither? If, by reason of

* Judith xvi. 18. † Esther xv. ‡ Gen. iii. 6.

my dim sight, I cannot in this transitory life behold the beauty with my corporal eyes, it sufficeth that with the spectacles of faith I obtain the knowledge of Thee, in consideration whereof my soul and my powers are transformed into Thee, and carried away with the love of Thy unspeakable beauty. Great is the power that corporal beauty hath to feed the eyes and to allure the heart, but far greater is the drowsiness and lumpishness of him who can content himself to settle his heart upon any corporal beauty, having before his eyes such an immeasurable beauty of Thee, my God, as enforceth sensible creatures to follow it.

SIXTH MEDITATION.

HOW AND IN WHAT MANNER GOD OUGHT TO BE BELOVED.

IF thou desire to know, O my soul, what mean and measure thou ought to observe in loving thy God, it is without all measure. When God commanded thee to love thy neighbour, He set withal a task, saying that thou shouldst love him as thyself,* and not more than thyself; but in commanding to love His Divine Majesty, He set no limit at all, but said absolutely that thou shouldst love Him: for God is to be loved as much as ever thou art able for to love Him.

Thou, O Lord, art so good that how much soever

* St. Matt. xxii. 37.

any creature doth love thee, he can never love Thee so much as thou deservest to be beloved; and, therefore, the measure wherewithal we ought to love God is to love Him without measure. Hereupon the Scripture saith, "Glorify God as much as you are able, for that He is greater than all praise."*

Love thou therefore, O my soul, thy God as much as He is amiable, and that is sufficient. Wherefore marvellest thou at that which I say? Knowest thou not, haply, that the Scripture commandeth us to praise Him according to the multitude of His greatness, that is, according as He is praiseworthy? Thou wilt answer me that no man is able so to love or praise Him but Himself, because Himself only is equal to Himself in loving Himself, Whose love is infinite, and His greatness also. Thou sayest well, but if thou be not able sufficiently to praise Him, yet never cease praising Him; and if thou be not able to praise Him as thou oughtest, yet love Him as much as thou art able, for thou needest not to fear any excess in thy love, where all the ability and whole power is overcome with the glory and excellence of the beloved. The force of the lover, and the eloquence of him that prayeth, is vanquished with the virtue and deserts of Him that is loved and praised.

The Seraphim burn and the angelical Virtues are inflamed with the love of Him, as it is written, "He maketh His spirits Angels and His servants a burning fire."† They never cease burning, and yet never think that they have burned enough. And what is all this our love here on earth in comparison

* Ecclus. xliii. 33. † Psalm ciii. 4.

of that burning fire of those angelical spirits and blessed souls? All our love is but lukewarmness compared with the fiery flames. I love Thee, therefore, my Lord and my God, without all mean and measure, because Thou hast in like manner loved us; and Thou, Who hast done all things in weight, number, and measure, in loving hast observed neither mean nor measure. In this only Thou hast exceeded, O our God, and passed all measure exceeding above all reason and understanding, and having in all things, as I said even from the beginning, observed a measure, in loving us Thou wouldst hold neither mean nor measure, but Thy love hath exceeded all measure.

Pardon, O Lord, I beseech Thee, pardon Thy servant presuming to talk of Thee with delight and great boldness, for Thou hast exceeded and wonderfully exceeded in loving us, O our God! Was not this, I pray, a wonderful excess, that the Son of God should be hanged on the Cross for a vile seely worm of the earth? Was not this great excess for the Creator to die that the creature might live? Is not this a strange and excessive case of love for the Maker to lose His life for the work which He made, the Innocent for the guilty, and the Judge for the sinner? If this be measure, O Lord, with Thy divine wisdom it is measure; for in all understanding created, it is excess, a great excess and a wonderful great excess.

I will not be afraid to say that which the Evangelist speaketh, that Moses and Elias did talk with Thee in Thy transfiguration of Thy sacred Passion,* which

* St. Luke ix. 31.

St. Luke calleth excess. We do naturally put the hand or arm in danger to defend the head, which is the chiefest member, but it was an excess of great love that Thou, my God and Lord, being our Head, shouldst put Thyself in danger of death and die upon the Cross to defend us Thy members. The holy Apostle likewise, full of the Holy Ghost, was not afraid to say that it was a superabundant charity wherewith Thou hast loved us,* and that in such wise that, being the Son of God, Thou gavest Thyself for us most vile and contemptible slaves.

O excessive and great charity! The Prophet calleth the work of our redemption a copious redemption,† but the Apostle more plainly or properly calleth it excessive and superabundant. Thy charity, O Lord, was excessive, in that Thou didst pay for us in Thy bitter Passion more than we did owe, an excessive satisfaction, seeing that one drop of Thy most precious Blood being sufficient for our whole satisfaction, by reason of the infinite value of Thy Person, Thou pouredst it forth by streams, to show the excessive love that Thou didst bear us.

Now, therefore, ought I to love Thee likewise, my God, so excessively, so earnestly, so firmly and constantly, that there be neither end nor measure in my love. I will exceed and reach beyond my power in loving Thee. I will make myself drunk with this Thy holy love, and forget myself for love. If it be true love it hath this property, that it maketh a man beside himself and casteth him into a trance. Hereupon, in the Canticles, the Bridegroom, weighing well

* Ephes. i. 8. † Psalm cxxix. 7.

and considering the love of His spouse, compareth it unto wine, for the property that wine hath is to make a man forget himself that drinketh much of it; and the spouse saith unto Him, "The King did put me in His wine-cellar,"* and for that this wine is charity, she added forthwith, saying, "And I inclined my heart to divers degrees of charity." The soul, being wounded, shall be able to pardon and suffer injuries, but, considering well wherein the love is exercised, that is very easy and delectable.

O my God and infinite Good, that a man had the wisdom of Angels to declare this Thy love towards us! Sure I am that whosoever will be herein well instructed should become perfectly enamoured of Thy divine majesty and goodness. Thy love Thou hast put on the Cross and in gall and vinegar, and ours thou hast placed in honeycombs. Oh, what a hard law and condition hath that love of Thine, O God, towards us, and how sweet and easy is that of ours towards Thee, seeing that even unto death Thou dost not accomplish the law of Thy love, and until we live in Thy Kingdom and glory we cannot as we desire accomplish the law of our soul. But as much as I am able, and shall be possible for me, I will love Thee in this life more than anything that I have, and more than myself. Hereupon Thou demandest of Thy Apostle, St. Peter, if he loved Thee more than the rest, because Thou wilt be loved of us more than all other things, and above them all and without end and measure. All other virtues have their bounds and measure, only the virtue of love and charity hath none at all.

* Cant. ii. 4.

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

HOW GOD OUGHT ONLY TO BE BELOVED.

THE feet of the soul are love, and with love am I carried whithersoever I go, and like as this our body hath two feet whereon it walketh, so likewise hath the soul two loves and affections that carry it, which are Thy holy and divine love and the love of worldly things.

After that Jacob had wrestled with the Angel, and was called the man that had seen God, the Angel touched one of his legs, and he remained lame of one foot.* When my soul, O Lord, knoweth the excellency of Thy goodness, and descrieth some part of Thy divine perfections, it goeth by and bye limping in the love of the world, and walketh upright in the way of Thy holy love. Wherefore should my soul become an adulteress, having a husband so beautiful and rich and so worthy to be beloved? I will halt in the love of the world and way of wickedness, that I may run swiftly through the paths of Thy divine love when I shall taste of Thy divine sweetness, according to that which the Prophet saith, "I have run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou enlargedst mine heart."†

The pleasure and taste of love enlargeth the heart, and maketh it run with delight to keep Thy commandments. The burthen of the love of the world

* Gen. xxxii. 25. † Psalm cxviii. 32.

weigheth down the wings of my love to Thee, so that I cannot fly unto Thee, my God, Who art the centre of my soul. And wherefore, then, will I charge myself with the love of things which hinder the flight of my soul towards her Creator and Spouse? I will abhor with all my heart all things beside Thee, seeing that Thou alone art sufficient for me. He loveth Thee less, O Lord, who loveth other things with Thee, unless he love them for Thee; he hath his love parted and a heart divided who, not content with Thy love only, loveth, and not for Thy sake, Thy creatures.

It is a marvellous thing that, man being what he is, Thou contentest Thyself, my God, with him alone, and Thou, being what Thou art, man cannot content himself with Thee only, but that he will needs love other things besides Thee, and not for Thy sake, as though Thou alone wert not sufficient for him. What! O Lord my God, and my whole bliss, art Thou so small a matter that Thou canst not suffice me? O Centre of my heart and Spouse of my soul, what would I have in heaven or earth beside Thee? If Thou be goodness itself, and containest in the highest degree all manner of good, wherefore goeth my soul seeking goods amongst miserable creatures, and forsaketh Thee, the fountain of all good? Why wandereth my heart in the love of creatures, having been taught by experience that they set it not at rest, and that I find not in them any perfect quietness to my mind? When we want them we do greatly covet them, and when we have them we do utterly abhor them. All earthly things do tell me that I should

only love Thee; before I have gotten them I do highly esteem them, and when I possess them I make no account of them. Before I had obtained them they had this good quality, which was, by their absence, to be able to move my desire with appearance of good, more vain than true good indeed. But after I once enjoyed them my desire ceased, and, that ceasing, I discovered how little they were worth, and so made little account of them.

The more that we possess a creature the better we know it, and the further it is absent the more we are ignorant of it. In being possessed it imparteth itself, and thereby maketh many defects manifest which before were unknown, and so the will maketh less reckoning of it than before. The goods of the earth give presently discontentment, and so soon as we begin to enjoy them they discover their defects and imperfections.

If, then, Thou, my God, the more that Thou art beloved and possessed, the more Thou discoverest the riches of Thy goodness and infinite perfections, wherefore seek I to wear, contrary to the commandment of Thy law,* a garment of linsey-woolsey, mixing the imperfect love of the creature with the excellency of Thy holy love? The creature, if it favour me in some things, yet will it not in all things, and although it would in all, yet can it not, and although it both would and could, which is impossible, yet not at all times nor in all places. And wherefore, then, shall I not make more account to be beloved of Him Who is able to please me in more things than I am able to

* Deut. xxii. 11.

conceive, to imagine, to ask, or desire, and that at all times and in all places?

Oh, how doth the world and our flesh bewitch us and draw us on without any spark of clear knowledge, seeing that we refuse that eternal goodness and wonderful beauty of God to abuse ourselves with such vile things as are the creatures of this world. Love Him because thou enjoyest Him, love thyself because thou art beloved of Him.

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

HOW GOD OUGHT TO BE BELOVED BECAUSE HE IS THE CENTRE OF OUR SOUL.

ALL things do naturally seek their centre, and do desire their perfection and end, and therein they rest and stay themselves. The stone coveteth its natural centre, and therefore descendeth downward; the rivers, with a violent course, do run into the sea, from whence they first issued; the fire mounteth swiftly towards its sphere, and resteth not till it come to its utmost end.

O Creator of all things! and what art Thou, my God, but the end and centre of our souls? Thou hast created us for Thyself, and our heart is never at rest until it come unto Thee. As the stone doth naturally descend towards its centre, so, contrariwise, the affections of my soul do ascend, and desire their chief felicity, which art Thou, my God; and as the

stone is kept by force from its centre, as we see by experience, in that the stop being removed it presently falleth downward, so is my soul never at rest and quiet until she be come unto Thee. My soul is never content with riches, nor with honours, nor delights, but only with Thee, my God, the true rest and quietness of my heart.

This did the Wise Man well consider when he said, "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity."* Vain is all that which filleth not, and vain are all those things terrestrial, seeing that they fill not so much as our soul is able to contain, nor accomplish her desires, nor are anyways sufficient to satisfy her appetites. If all things, then, do naturally tend to their end, and Thou, Lord, art the end of man and the most perfect end of all things, it is meet that with the more haste and greater speed we run towards Thee than natural things go towards their centre and particular ends.

And, forasmuch as the feet of my soul wherewith she cometh unto Thee are her affections, it is necessary that I love Thee, my God, that I may come to my centre. To this rest and quietness Thou callest us, O Lord, when Thou sayest in Thy holy Gospel, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you." You wanderer, disquieted and troubled, serving the world and your disobedient passions, come unto Me, and you shall be placed in your sphere, and enjoy perfect rest and quietness.

Break off, therefore, O my soul, in earnest with the world, cast off her heavy burthens and return to thy

* Eccles. i. 2.

rest, for it is clear, if thou wilt open thine eyes, that the force of love will carry thee to thy Lord as to thy proper centre. Thou seest plainly that in her thou findest no rest at all, and therefore, when thou shalt once be with Him, thou shalt take thine ease, and say, with the Prophet, "In peace will I sleep and rest in Himself."* And if thou wilt but take advice of thine own experience, it will tell thee that thy love reposeth itself in nothing but in God only, for all other things thrust thee off from themselves and send thee to thy centre.

Seest thou not plainly that if thou love anything for itself besides God, that in such love there is great disquietness, bitterness, and much care and grief? Oh, how unsavoury, how bitter and unpleasant is every creature, if it be beloved for itself! What doleful tragedies, what woeful and lamentable casualties would fond foolish lovers write unto us if we should demand their judgments herein! They would never make an end of telling it, nor we of hearing it. Every creature doth disdainfully thrust thee from itself, and giveth thee as it were a blow, to the end that, departing from it, thou mightest seek thy Creator, and, as though twitting thee, it should say unto thee:

Wherefore drawest thou towards me, miserable creature? wherefore desirest thou me, wretched soul? I am not the good that thou seekest, and which thou wouldst love. Go on thy way, pass forward, and forsake not the king's right, and king's highway, which will bring thee to thy God; and yet thou for

* Psalm iv. 9.

all that, blind, foolish, and doating, take no heed, but embracest that thing which carest not for thee, and which will presently cast thee off, and to thine own discredit thou strivest to hold it against its own will, and followeth that which flieth thee, and is given thee to serve thee. Yea, and further, whether thou wilt or no, thou givest it the mastery over thee. Such is thy folly and vanity, and yet will not this thy liking continue long time, but will shortly seem sour and bitter, and thou wilt quickly be satisfied, and abhor that which with so great desire and pains thou hast so carefully sought, and shortly will seek out some new toy to content thee. And thus shalt thou walk miserably in a circle, not finding any creature able to content thee, as it is written, "The head of them is the circuit of them;"* and in another place he saith, "The wicked walk in a circuit."†

Wherefore turn thee unto God as to the true centre, and let not the vanities of the world and the dross of the earth be any means for to stay thee. A rock being removed from its place, and falling from on high, it is a fearful thing to behold with what a violent force it falleth, with what a noise it tumbleth downwards, with what speed and swiftness it hasteneth to come to the natural place, and where it may rest; and all that ever standeth in the way it dasheth, breaketh, and shivereth in pieces, that it may come to the place it goeth to. In like manner, so art thou, O my soul, to give thyself to thy God and Creator, and not to be a little ashamed to see thyself overcome and excelled by an insensible stone, that it should

* Psalm cxiii. † Psalm xi. 9.

with greater violence haste towards its centre than thou towards thine.

Thrust aside, therefore, overthrow and cast down whatsoever stoppeth or hindereth thee in the way to thy God, break it in pieces, and march forward as it is written, "I will pass through the wall in my God."* For when, as by any light blast of the wind of pride or envy, or through covetousness of any worldly thing, thou art hindered and stayed, well may we know of how little weight thou art, and how like unto the light chaff which the wind, by reason of the lightness, holdeth up in the air and keepeth from descending. But what can stay stones from falling? Who is to stop them? So virtuous men in like manner, neither more nor less, all the world cannot stay nor separate from their good. Behold St. Paul, the apostolic rock, and of great weight, with what violence he went towards his God, whom nothing could stay from going to his centre. "Who shall separate us," saith he, "from the love of God? Shall haply tribulation or anguish of mind? Shall hunger, nakedness, danger, or persecution of sword? I am sure that neither death nor life, nor the Angels, nor Principalities, nor Virtues, nor time present nor time to come, nor highness, nor lowness, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord."†

Oh, great, excellent, and wonderful weight of a holy soul as was this of the divine Apostle. O most mighty rock, which with his poise and greatness thrust aside and beat down whatsoever might stop

* Psalm xvii. 30. † Romans viii. 35.

and stay him from that he sought and desired; by anguish of mind and many labours, by hunger and thirst, by heat and cold, and by all other fearful and terrible things, with all possible speed, he may haste to come and arrive at his centre; whose will, after a sort, was converted into nature. The stone, by its natural force, goeth to its centre; marry, the soul not so, but with a voluntary and free violence.

Renounce thou then, my soul, this faculty which God hath given thee, and turn liberty into nature, that with all thy power, and with all thy whole force, thou mayest come to that place that thou tendest to. This is that which God commandeth thee when He saith, that thou shouldst love Him with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, with all thy force, and with all thy strength; to wit, that thou shouldst love Him to the uttermost of thy power, as it were naturally.

NINTH MEDITATION.

HOW LOVE CARRIETH US TO GOD AS TO OUR CENTRE.

IT is manifest and certain, O Lord, that as Thou art the felicity of man, so the whole force of love doth naturally incline and carry man unto Thee, as to his beginning and centre, albeit many times it be disorderly distracted to other base things, much against the honour and worthiness thereof. For as nature doth always direct unto one thing, so doth our whole will carry us unto one thing, although, through

liberty thereof, it be capable of many, and may, as it listeth, turn which way it pleaseth. In the will is no necessity, as there is in nature; but I would that it had pleased my God that there had been. And that such, necessarily, that we could not, though we would, possibly be able to separate ourselves from Thee, but be continually joined unto Thee, as after this life of Thy great mercy we shall be.

Alas, and woe is me, that I behold in men a great miracle, a very naughty miracle, and worthy to be lamented. Wouldst thou not think it a very great miracle, to see a mighty huge rock hanging high in the air, and holden up with a feather? Or to see a piece of paper stop the violent stream of a swift running river? Who would not bless himself to see such a sight? Who would not wonder and be afraid at it? And why do I not then a whit marvel when I behold very small things and trifles to be able to stop and stay men from coming unto Thee, my God? It is a strange case that man, who hath by nature a very weighty poise which carries him towards Thee, my God, should with such light trifling toys as these are of the earth, be stayed and detained. We are "strangers in this world,"* as Holy Writ termeth us, and we travel unto Thee, my God, as to our own native country,† and the very nature of our souls, in whom, as the Apostle saith, "we move, live, and be."‡ And as often as we sin, we stop and stay by the way, and that which is marvellous and most to be wondered at is, that such vain and idle things are able to let and hinder us. My love is my poise, and

* 1 St. Peter ii. 11. † Hebrews xi. 14. ‡ Acts xvii. 28.

with my love I am carried which way soever I go; and, as Thou hast given, O Lord, to the stone its weight to descend to its centre place, which is its natural place, so hast Thou given unto our souls a weight, which is the desire of the chief good and perfect felicity, that thereby they might the more swiftly ascend to Thee.

If this, then, be so, how is it possible, O my God, that every soul which Thou hast created maketh not great haste to come unto Thee? And yet see we for all that how with a little puff of wind it is stayed and deprived of all good, and lieth laughing, rejoicing, and taking its rest. How is it possible that any creature capable of Thee should not go towards Thee so fast as it is able, being the infinite centre, infinitely good, and consequently infinitely attractive? What is able to detain a creature capable of so great a good? O heavy weight of sin, which laid upon the necks of brutish men presseth and swayeth them downward that they cannot ascend to their sphere, for which they were created. Verily it is a greater miracle for souls not to mount up unto God by love than for great stones with a little wind to be hanged and stayed in the air from descending to their centre, and more than for a thin sheet of paper to stay the violent stream of a river from running into the sea. Who would not be discontented with this life if he knew certainly of how great bliss he is deprived, and how great good he loseth? O most ungrateful veil of my flesh, of how great joy dost thou bereave me? Who withholdeth me from rending and tearing thee with mine own hands, that I might go see my God

and enjoy Him, and rest me in Him? Oh, what pleasures and how great bliss do I miss by thy means, and yet, which is worst of all, I, knowing all this, and seeing it, and understanding that it is so, do suffer thee for all that, and do laugh and am merry, and weep not, nor bewail night and day this banishment, blindness, and my miserable misfortune, as I should do of reason. Whereupon proceedeth this vile and ungrateful patience, but in that there is a veil before my face, and the cloud of flesh letteth that the clearness of the sun cannot shine into the eyes of my soul? Take away this cover that hindereth thee, and thou shalt see with how great violence the soul will hasten towards her centre. Behold the souls of the Saints, who, having cast off this veil and being now set free, with what haste and great speed they run unto God. Who could stay them? who could keep them back? who could withhold them from their place? There is full and perfect rest, there is entire satiety of all the appetites and desires of their heart.

Whereby, "great is our Lord and praiseworthy;"* and no less worthy to be beloved than worthy to be praised. Moreover, when my soul is in the city of our Lord, and in His holy mount, there is her force of love inflamed where no interposition of any veil doth hinder it; yea, and now the thinner and more transparent that the veil is, so much the more doth the soul move forward towards her God; and the more doth the force of love take place, and work in her, as it falleth out contrariwise unto many which have the veil of flesh so gross and thick, through

* Psalm xlvii. 2.

their great abundance of riches and temporal goods, that they make very slow and lax haste to their centre. Such men love God little or nothing: but those that with watching, fasting, and other abstinence do make thin, weaken, and rend in pieces the veil of their flesh, there shineth after a sort through the transparence thereof, even in this mortal life, that blessed light into the eyes of their souls, according to that which the Apostle saith, "We see now by a glass after a dark sort,"* and they run after the sweet savour of His ointments.

It chanceth also sometimes that these beams of divine light by some chinks and crevices beglimmer a little while into the eyes of their souls, and they are melted forthwith into love, whereby with great violence they are carried up, drawn on with the sweetness of the savour that they smell, but more by the excellent beauty that they behold. But alas! that gleam endureth but awhile, and these pleasant beams do pass away quickly. They strike the soul, and presently vanish, and as Job saith, "He hideth His light in His hands, and commandeth it to come another time. And hereof He saith to His friends, that it is His possession, and that He may ascend unto it:"† but forthwith, as soon as it is kindled in His hand, it shineth out a little between His fingers; for if with His whole light He should shine forth at full, He should with His wonderful brightness rather blind than lighten even the celestial spirits, for that they would be overcome with such exceeding great clearness.

Who, therefore, could be able to abide His divine

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. † Job xxxvi. 32.

majesty, if Himself should not moderate it? After this sort are spiritual men in this life entertained, till such time as they can come to see Thee clearly, my God, in the next, whereby they shall be perfectly in the centre of bliss enjoying Thy divine essence.

TENTH MEDITATION.

HOW THE SOUL RESTETH NOT BUT ONLY IN GOD AS IN HER CENTRE.

SINCE my soul doth naturally incline by love unto Thee, my God, were not this her nature defiled and corrupted with sin, Thou shouldst never have needed more to command her to love Thee, than Thou commandest us to love ourselves, whereunto we are prone enough, and over prone, by nature; and it needeth not to will or command us what concerneth and belongeth unto us by nature. And therefore, seeing man doth naturally incline to love Thee, and more Thee than himself, wherefore dost Thou command us Thy holy love, being a thing most natural, and commandest not the love of ourselves? Sin surely is the very cause thereof, when the soul, turning her eyes from God, and casting and setting them upon herself, doth stop and stay that flowing stream of love which with violent course did run unto Thee, my God.

Now, therefore, may we see that they needed no such commandment if nature had been preserved in

that purity wherein she was created. And hereupon it cometh that at the first creation we read not that Thou gavest either to Angels or men any such commandment when Thou createdst them, for that they, naturally inclined thereunto, needed not any spur to prick them forward to fulfil that commandment when by a secret and inward law of love they were presently instructed and framed by their Creator. But now have we forgotten this natural love, and declined from our own nature, insomuch that neither by commandments, nor promises, nor threats, nor great and daily benefits, we can be brought to love Thee as we ought to do, but as a plummet of lead being violently stayed on high, if it be once let go falleth presently downward, so a soul, if it be a little by force drawn upward into high and spiritual things, doth presently, through her lumpishness, descend and fall down to earthly and transitory matters, and doth wholly employ herself upon these sensible creatures.

Tell me, therefore, my soul, and answer me, O thou wretched creature, and show me what is the cause wherefore thou runnest so willingly, hungry and thirsty, after creatures, so shamefully begging of them a little drop of muddy, unsavoury, and brackish water, which rather augmenteth than slaketh thy thirst, and leaveth the clear, sweet, and perpetual fountain of all good, in which alone thou mayest quench thy heat and satisfy thyself to thy own will and liking? Tell me, miserable wretch, what thing thou canst desire that thou findest not much more abundantly and entirely in thy God than thy heart can imagine it? If wisdom delight thee, He is most wise; if power and

strength, He is most mighty and strong; if thou desire glory and riches, there is great glory and riches in His house; if delights and pleasures, He holdeth delights and pleasures in His right hand, even to the end; if satiety and abundance of desires, they are drunken with the abundant store of His house who do possess it. And how chanceth it then, silly wretch, that knowing this and much more than I am able to declare, thou wilfully leavest the sea of all good, and goest careful, pensive, and heavy, seeking thy consolation and pleasures in little brooks and channels of creatures, thou makest no account of the fountain which yieldeth them unto thee for nothing, and diggest the pits with great toil and labour? O miserable madness, exceeding great folly, and wonderful blindness, hereupon it is that our Lord, being angry, crieth out by His Prophet, saying, "Be astonished, or afraid, O ye heavens, and let their gates be beaten down, saith our Lord, for My people hath done two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of lively water, and digged themselves pits which can hold no water."*

Verily all the glory of this world is as a floating pool, and the delights of the flesh as a pit with broken brinks, all honour and worship as a lake whereof the dam is perished, and all abundance of riches as a leaking ship full of holes which can hold no water; and if thou believest me not, but thinkest that I beguile thee, ask thine own experience, and consider with how greedy desire thou hast sought for some point of worship, and what exceeding great pains

* Jer. ii. 12, 13.

thou hast taken to obtain it, which gotten, within three or four days after thou madest no account of it, for it is but as a boat full of holes, which can hold no water. Thou hast desired some delights and hast obtained it, and presently it vanished away, for it is a pit with broken banks, and cannot contain the waters of delight which were nearing it. These vanities have quickly flitted and vanished like smoke, and yet remainest thou by the pit's side as thirsty, yea, and sometimes more thirsty and desirous of drink than before.

Pass over and run through all things, and thou shalt find that this is so in them all, and yet see we by experience for all this with what labour and pains, with how great toil and danger men frame their rotten leaking boats, and how, to dig their crazed pits, they travel day and night by sea and land, in wars and dangers of death, and many of them in toilsome services of sins, and make but small reckoning of the clear fountain of lively waters which runneth through their streets, nor esteem it, though they be invited unto it.

This is that Fountain which crieth aloud to all in the streets, "He that is thirsty let him come unto Me and drink."* And in another place Thou callest by the Prophet, saying, "All ye that have thirst come to the waters; come buy, without either gold or silver or any exchange, both wine and milk. Wherefore do you bestow your silver, and not in bread, and your labour, and not in satiety?"† He giveth freely, yet no man repayeth unto Him, and therefore He com-

* St. John vii. 37. † Isaias lv. 1.

plaineth unto His Angels and Saints, saying, Be ye astonished and afraid, ye heavens, to wit, ye blessed Angels, and marvel at this, you that are exempted from all grief and sorrow; but ye gates, which are My Saints as yet living in flesh, by whom as by gates many enter into Heaven, mourn ye and bewail this horrible and execrable blindness of your people, this exceeding great error of miserable mortal men, and this wonderful madness of the children of Adam.

Leave, therefore, my soul, leave, I beseech thee, this broken rotten leaking pit, which with so great toil thou hast digged, and run and get thee with all speed to the Fountain of lively waters, which is to thy God and Spouse Jesus Christ, where thou mayest at thy pleasure quench all thy thirst. Here shalt thou be satisfied with delights and true pleasure, even as thy heart can wish, and as thou wilt and desirest. In our Lord only shall thou find quietness and rest, and not in anything else in the world. He only is thy centre and proper natural sphere; without Him thou shalt find no contentment, and in Him thou shalt have all bliss, rest, and glory.

ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

HOW WE OUGHT TO LOVE GOD BECAUSE HE LOVETH US.

IF so many reasons, as I said, that induce me to love Thee, O Lord of my heart and Spouse of my soul, are not sufficient to cause my heart night and day continually to burn in the flames of love, yet let the immeasurable love at least which Thou bearest me rouse up and awaken me.

There is nothing that more causeth love than to be beloved, and hereupon we love those that love us, although they be unworthy our love, only because they love us. Who is so strange and barbarous that loveth not those that love him? Even the most cruel sort of men are wont to love such as love them, and will they not afford to do the like unto Thee, being the same that Thou art, and loving them so dearly that Thou gavest Thyself for them? Insomuch that love cannot be requited but with love only, it is surely very meet, O Lord, that I love Thee, and that I burn in glowing coals of pure fire of love, seeing that I am so fervently beloved of Thee.

If thou doubt, therefore, my soul, of the love which God beareth thee, His testimonies surely are most credible. The Cross is witness, the nails are witnesses, the dolours and pains witnesses, the confusion witness, the streams of blood witnesses, and the sharp and most bitter death which He suffered for thee is witness; and yet, when He had endured all this He thought it but little, so great was His love,

and if it had been possible He wished and desired yet to suffer greater things for thee, greater pains, greater griefs, and greater torments, for this is that He cried out on the Cross when He said that He thirsted,* and in the Psalms likewise He saith, "I have run in my thirst,"† as much as to say, "I am ready to suffer for man." And although it be written of Him that He shall be filled with reproaches, and in another place also the Scripture saith that His Soul shall be full of contumelies, yet, being full, for all that He desireth more, and is thirsty touching His love and affection. He was full, for that from the soles of His feet unto the crown of His head there was no whole place, and He was thirsty, for that His love was not yet full of griefs, although His body was full of stripes.

If, therefore, thou be cold, my soul, in loving so great a Lover, thou showest thyself harder than the stones, for thou knowest that at the time He vouchsafed to suffer these things, they brake in pieces, hard as they were, and they which had no sense showed to have sense, that thou mightest see what the hearts of men are bound to do that have sense.

If the stones could not endure so great a weight of love, learn thou of the hard stones to love thy Creator. And why dost thou not relent, miserable creature, seeing that the stones break asunder at so great a benefit, and that the stones execute the office of hearts instead of men. Become thou, therefore, the disciple of stones, and learn to love the most precious jewel that ever Thou gavest us, O our God. The most excellent guest that ever was received at Thy

* St. John xix. 28. † Psalm cxviii.

divine hands was love. Thy love towards man was an inward hidden secret and an internal gift and favour, and the beginning and foundation of all other gifts and favours; for as it argueth that there is fire from whence we see smoke and sparkles to arise, so prove we the love that Thou hast borne us by the benefits which thou hast done in us and for us.

Herein Thou praisest Thyself by the Prophet Malachias, saying, "Behold that I have loved you."* Thou hast taken this love out of Thyself and bestowed it on us, not by mutation and change, but by participation. Thou createdst the heaven and replenished it with Angels; Thou createdst the air and filledst it with birds, the sea with fishes, and the earth with living creatures, but man Thou hast lodged in Thyself, as Thou saidst to the Patriarch Abraham, "I am thy reward great and copious."† The love that Thou bearest unto man appeareth by the favours that Thou showest him. Thou lovest us so much that even in chastising us Thou pretendest our commodities, Thou seekest thereby to make us to know and humble ourselves and to amend our lives. When Thou didst send those seven plagues unto Egypt Thou saidst unto Moses, "This I do that the Egyptians may know that I am God."‡ Thou wouldst make Thyself to be known of those Gentiles that they might forsake their idolatry, serve Thee, and be saved. Thou commandedst in the Gospel the servant to be sold who owed ten thousand talents,§ that, being threatened with this punishment, he might humble himself, and merit thereby to get Thee to forgive

* Mal. i. 1. † Gen. xv. 1. ‡ Exod. vii. 17. § St. Matt. xviii. 25.

him his whole debt. O Lord God of Israel, how good art Thou towards us, and how exceeding dost Thou love us, seeing that as well in tribulations as in the pleasures that Thou sendest us, Thou pretendest our profit. And Thou lovest also, O Lord, not only that which is in me of Thine, but even that which is in me of mine own freewill, if it be good, although Thou abhor the malice which is in me, by reason whereof, if it were possible to chastise the sins of those in hell without punishing their persons, Thou wouldst surely do it, so much dost Thou love our nature; but because it is impossible to chastise the one without the other, for that sins and offences are accidents, and cannot be without a subject, therefore when Thou punishedst the one Thou tormentest the other. If one receive a wound with a sword, and after it be healed, there remaineth a scar, though he loathe both the stroke and the scar, yet loveth he the flesh whereon they were given. So Thou in like manner, O Lord, lovest the creatures that Thou createst, abhorring the sins and offences which proceed of man's own freewill.

It is written in the Book of Wisdom that Thou abhorrest nothing of all that Thou hast made.* Thou madest not sin, nor death, nor takest pleasure in the destruction of those that die, but the malice of a perverse and wicked will is the author of sin. Wherefore, punishing in hell the evil which a man hath done, Thou preservest nature, which is good, and Thine own, for Thy love continueth immoveable towards that good nature which Thou hast created.

* Wisdom xi. 25.

Thou showest, O Lord, Thy great love that Thou bestowest upon men, and so, likewise, all that ever Thou dost for us proceeds of that flaming fervent love wherewith Thou lovest us.

Predestination cometh of love, and the creation of heaven and earth and all other things proceedeth of love. Wherefore, as Thou desirest, O Lord, that we should imitate Thee in all things, so requirest Thou that all our actions be inflamed with love, and hereupon it cometh that Thou wilt not accept any which is not beautified with love, and the reason is because he who giveth Thee gold or silver giveth Thee outward things, but he who loveth Thee giveth Thee himself, and this is the cause why Thou rejectest the services which we do Thee, for that Thou findest not in them the love which we owe Thee.

Thou sayest, O Lord, in the Gospel, that as the Father loveth Thee, so Thou lovest us; for as the Father loveth Thee in human nature, which of His goodness Thou receivedst, so of Thy goodness Thou dost love us, without any desert or merit of ours. And why lovest thou Him then, my soul, Who so much loveth Thee? Although it now seem painful, and grieve thee to love Him, yet after thou hast once begun to love thy God, thou shalt find such a pleasant taste and delight in love, that thou shalt find it a great torment to leave off thy love not to lose so great sweetness. Then it shall not be painful to break off earnestly with the world for love of thy Spouse, Jesus Christ. This torment is nothing comparable to the other, for it is a greater grief to leave off

the love of God after thou hast once tasted of it, than to break off with the world and to begin to love thy God.

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

HOW WE OUGHT TO LOVE GOD BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US.

THOU having a desire, O Lord, to bring us to love Thee, thoughtest it good and vouchsafedst to love us first, that, getting us as it were by the hand, and we being prevented with Thy grace, might never cease to love Thee. Thou foundest no better means than to love them of whom Thou soughtest to be beloved. "Thou hast loved us first," saith St. John,* wherefore, besides that Thy love is infinite and can never be requited, this loving of us first is such an exceeding favour that it is impossible for us ever to make sufficient recompense for it. David was never able to requite Jonathan for that first love wherewith Jonathan loved David, nor that liberality which he used towards him, giving him his own garments from his back in token of the great love that he bore him.† Wherefore David, seeing himself so much bound to requite the love which he did owe unto Jonathan, loved him as his own life,‡ and that not only whilst he lived, but he showed also the great love which he bore at his death, which he so grievously bewailed with many tears.

I will love Thee, therefore, my God, my refuge, and

* 1 St. John iv. 19. † 1 Kings xviii. 4. ‡ 2 Kings i. 26.

my strength, for Thy great mercies,* and although in all Thy works Thou art wonderful, yet in the inward hearty love that Thou bearest unto man I find Thee most marvellous. "Thy mercies," saith the Prophet, "are above all Thy works."† Thou rejectest none, Thou destroyest none, Thou despisest none, and even those that offend Thee, and fly from Thee, Thou seekest incessantly and gently callest them. Thou pardonest all that repent, Thou receivest all that return, and expectest even those that from day to day do defer their penance. Thou settest in the way those that err, Thou invitest those that refuse, Thou awakest the sluggard, Thou embracest those that come unto Thee, Thou comfortest the sorrowful, Thou raisest up him that is fallen, and openest to all that call.

It is a marvellous matter that a sinner who hath forsaken the chief felicity and infinite goodness, and finding no contentment in any of those transitory things that he loveth, can get no other remedy but to return unto Him that he hath grievously offended. The prodigal child, finding nothing but travail, toil, and miseries in all things created, had no other shift but to return to the house of his father, whom he had before contemned.

Thou, O Lord, art our refuge and defence, and Thou hast loved us so dearly that, to win our love, thou hast "taken upon Thee," as Isaias saith, "our griefs and received our infirmities."‡ Thou hast changed with us Thy good for our evils, Thou didst weep that we might laugh, Thou fastedst that we

* Psalm xvii. 1. † Psalm cxliv. 9. ‡ Isaias liii. 4.

might eat, Thou labouredst that we might rest, Thou wert poor to enrich us, and finally, Thou sufferedst death that we might live. We inflict upon Thee infirmity, and Thou hast given us health. He who taketh a cold apple in his warm hand, the hand causeth heat in the apple, and the apple a coldness and savour in the hand. "For love of us," saith the Apostle, "Thou wert made poor, that by Thy poverty we might be made rich."*

Our love, for that it is limited and hath an end, cannot make of two things one, for how dearly soever man and wife do love, or brother and sister, they shall always continue two distinct persons; but the infinite love that Thou hast always borne us hath caused Thy divine nature and our human nature to be conjoined in one simple Person and in one Subject.

Solomon saith that a friend loveth at all times, and a brother is tried at a hard pinch.† O true friend of my soul, Who hath loved me at all times, in honour and dishonour, in life and in death. And whereas, being nailed on the Cross, Thou hadst no part at liberty wherewithal to show us favour but Thy tongue only, with that blessed tongue Thou gottest me pardon of Thy Father, praying even with tears,‡ as the holy Apostle witnesseth. And at the time that we were least worthy to be beloved, even then most of all didst Thou show Thy love that Thou didst bear us, declaring it with most wonderful words. Thou preachedst more often and wroughtest more miracles in the city of Capharnaum than in any other city of the kingdom of Judea or in the province of Galilee besides, to the

* 2 Cor. viii. 9. † Prov. xvii. 17. ‡ Heb. v. 7.

end that in that sea-coast city, where usury was most practised and vices did most abound, and which did least deserve Thy presence, Thy mercies should most shine and appear, and according to that which the Apostle saith, "Where sin did abound, His grace did excel."*

Who would not love such a loving God, that disdaineth not to love where He is least beloved? What conscience is there so horrible and full of sins that will despair of the mercy of God, seeing that He respected not the idolatries, covetousness, and filthiness of Capharnaum. I think there is no heart so hard, nor so proud and lofty, that will not be mollified and stoop at the presence of so great a lover.

St. Luke the Evangelist writing how, in the night of Thy sacred Passion, Thou wentest aside from Thy Disciples to pray in the Garden, about a stone's cast, useth this word "Avulsus."† This word "Avulsus" signifieth properly "plucked up by the root," as when men use all their force to pluck up a tree, root and earth. Thy Heart was so united by love unto these Thy Apostles, that Thou departedst from them as though one should have plucked Thy bowels out of Thy side.

O exceeding force of love, which could not without great grief abide to be absent the distance of a stone's cast; and art thou so many several years, O my soul, from thy God? Doth it never grieve thee? There is want of the love of God in thee. Thou canst not deny it. This great love of His would not suffer Him to go half a league aside from His Disciples, but as little space as a stone's cast. O God, Thou art love,

* Rom. v. 20. † St. Luke xxii. 41.

Thou art sweet, and most sweet; for there is no greater sweetness than wholly to love. God is love. He is not faith, but the foundation and object whereupon our faith is grounded. St. John saith no more but that "God is love," because we may understand how properly it belongeth unto Him to love us, as the work of His hands. Oh, by how great right and justice doth He require to be loved with all our strength and heart, desiring the homage of our whole soul, seeing that unto Him only we do give our whole will and our love.

O sweetness of holy love! and how rightly did that singular friend of God hit Thy name when he said—"God is charity, and he that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him."* O wonderful company and exchange of great gain, that I being as I am, Thou exchangest Thyself for me, my God; and that I loving Thee, Thou lovest me, to requite love with love. Love is free, for it proceedeth of a free mother, which is our will, which can neither with rewards be allured, nor with torments enforced, for if it were, it should presently cease to be a will. Hereupon it cometh to pass that love is so precious, and that thou requirest it at our hands, O Lord, as our jealous friend, for it is the jewel most properly our own that we are able to present to Thee. For this precious pearl and shining ruby of love, Thou hast given unto man all things created, making him lord of this world,† as the Psalmist saith; for that giving him all, Thou mightest bind him to pay Thee the whole debt of love which he oweth Thee as to his Creator.

* 1 St. John iv. 16. † Psalm viii. 7.

Thou placedst man at the first in the green gardens of earthly Paradise; Thou madest him lord of the whole earth, and preventedst him with singular gifts and many benefits, to the end he might love Thee; but as much wood is wont to quench fire and causeth it to smother away in smoke, so Adam, overladen with so many benefits, went weeping out of Paradise when, through his ingratitude, the divine finger of God was quenched in his miserable heart. But thou, my Lord and my Redeemer, seeking to feed, like the Cherubim, fire with fire, hast entered within the compass of my penalties, and taking firebrands in Thy sacred hands, hast cast them all over the City of Jerusalem, which is every one of our souls, according as the Prophet Ezechiel saw in figure.*

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

HOW THE LOVE THAT GOD BEARETH US IS ETERNAL AND AS ANCIENT AS HIMSELF.

THOU hast manifestly declared, O Lord, the great love that Thou bearest us, in that Thou lovedst us before we were beloved of ourselves. Thy love was not to requite my love, neither is my love able to satisfy the love that Thou hast borne me. The trial of Thy love is in loving me first, and Thou hast loved me first eternally, according to the saying of the Prophet—"The mercy of God is eternal, and remaineth for ever."† The holy King useth this word mercy,

* Ezech. x. 2. † Psalm xcix. 5.

speaking of this love, because this word mercy giveth me better to understand Who Thou art than the word love. Mercy is an affection of the mind which taketh pity of another man's misery, and provideth for his necessity, first using towards him compassion of mind. Not to impute that unto Thee which agreeth not with Thee because Thou art impassible, I will acknowledge that which is most properly in Thee, which is Thy love. There belongeth unto Thee neither compassion, nor a sorrowful heart, for Thy nature is the essence of perfection and glory; but to provide for the needy and miserable is most proper unto Thee.

I acknowledge the benefit that Thou hast given me, and that under this name of mercy; for Thou hast found in me neither beauty nor any good quality to induce Thee to love, but only misery to relieve, and poverty to enrich; by reason whereof the Prophet useth rather the word of mercy than of love. And so hast Thou loved me, wretched sinner, without any desert of mine, of Thy mere goodness and love only; and this love also was before that I was, for St. John, saying that Thou lovedst us first, and David, saying that Thy mercy is eternal, do both plainly declare the antiquity of Thy love, seeing that without beginning and eternally Thou hast loved us.

Thou knowest all things in Thyself, and it is not requisite that they be first done, nor that they do good or evil whereby they may be known of Thee; for as Thou receivest no knowledge by things done, so dost Thou not expect or tarry to know the works until they be wrought. There can neither be novelty nor accident in Thee, for this were a great imperfec-

tion, whereof the least jot in the world is far from Thee. Wherefore, when I behold anything done of new, I imagine not that thereupon Thou hast a new will, or that at that instant Thou beginnest to will it, but forthwith I come to consider that Thy most ancient and eternal disposition, in which eternally Thou hast ordained all things and determined all that ever I see done in our sight, but eternal in Thine, for before they are made or done, Thou knowest them; and so Thy mercy and love are eternal, for that in Thy eternity Thou hast seen, and perfectly known, the mystery of our sins, whereby we, deserving damnation, and Thou taking compassion of us, hadst mercy on us, and hast effectually sought a due time to give us grace and glory to heal our wounds and to destroy our death, giving us resurrection and life.

Consider, then, O my soul, how much thou art bound to this divine love, in that God hath loved thee so much before that ever thou wert able to wish Him well. Measure the short time of two hours, as it were, that thou hast lived and beginnest to be, with the eternity of God in which He hath loved thee. "A thousand years in the sight of God are but as yesterday, which is already gone and past."* Compare one thing with another, and thou shalt see thyself overcome and vanquished; and would to God thou wouldst behave thyself as men that are conquered, who remain prisoners in the power of the victor. Would to God thou wert so tied and overcome, that thou mightest for ever remain captive in the love of Him Who hath loved thee so much and so exceedingly

* Psalm lxxxix. 4.

in His eternity, that thereby thou mightest be delivered and set free from those chains of fire wherein all the sinners of the earth shall be imprisoned.

Thou hast never, O Lord, repented Thee of doing us good, how unthankful soever Thou hast found us, nor ever turned back in Thy mercies; for, as the Apostle saith, Thy gifts are without repentance;* there is not in Thee yea and no, for Thy yea continueth for ever faithful and true. I began for to be but yesterday, and have consumed my days in idleness, and that which is worse, in offending Thee a thousand ways. I have many times purposed to love Thee, and have turned back, and beginning sometimes to serve Thee, have returned to offend Thee; and hereof are mine own heart, the holy Angels, and all creatures witnesses.

O great shame and dishonour, O confusion, full of health, if I know it, when was it that thou knewest me not, and lovedst me not? Dost thou haply tarry the time till Thou wert born, to do me good? or was the filthiness of my fault a stay to thy divine goodness and beauty, to hinder Thee from working my weal?

O my God, infinite goodness, love eternal, and true salvation, I knew Thee not, no, not till many years after I was born; and now, when of Thy immeasurable charity Thou hast given me to know Thee, and that Thy exceeding beauty and goodness hath moved my affections, I have yet placed my love on the filthiness and corruption of creatures, and ceased to love Thee, Who art the infinite goodness, glory, and beauty of the Angels. I have stayed myself and continued in the love of those creatures which Thy fatherly care

* Rom. xi. 29.

provided for my pleasure and service, and to declare Who Thou art, and how worthy of love and reverence. Thy goodness, O Lord, and my malice conferred together, for that the more liberal Thou hast showed Thyself towards me, the more rebellious hast Thou found me against Thee, and the more ungrateful for the benefits which I have received of Thy bounty. My unthankfulness drieth not up the fountain of Thy mercy, for Thy bounty and clemency exceedeth all human malice: and for that love cannot be idle, but is showed by works, therefore, for the love that Thou has borne us, Thou hast bestowed on us the benefits of nature and grace, and hast promised us the bliss of glory if we keep Thy commandments.

Wherefore, Thou my God, and infinite goodness, shall not my heart love Thee, seeing me so prevented with Thy love and affection, and that Thou hast showed the exceeding love which Thou bearest me with so many benefits? The first things that mine eyes beheld after I was born were the gifts of Thy hand wherewith Thou hast entangled my heart to love Thee for ever. As the heaven called *Primum mobile*, by the violent motion thereof, draweth all the spheres after it from east to west, so the force of Thy holy love, which Thou hast borne first in Thy eternity, violently draweth after it all the powers of my soul and senses of my body, making them subject to the sweet service of the yoke of Thy holy law. This the spouse requested in the Canticles, at Thy hands, as a singular favour. "Draw me after Thee, and I will run after the sweet odour of Thine ointments."* By knowledge of

* Cant. i. 3.

these things, it followeth that I find myself much bound to love Him that hath loved me with so long continuance, and doth eternally bind me with so excellent great benefits.

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

FROM WHENCE THE LOVE THAT CHRIST BEARETH US DOTH PROCEED.

HAVING contemplated the antiquity and eternity of the love wherewithal Thou hast prevented us, if we will also consider the greatness thereof in this kind of meditation, O my good Lord and Saviour, all understanding created shall fail and not suffice, and no tongue is able to express it. Thy Apostle St. Paul saith that Thy charity surpasseth all knowledge and understanding, yea, even of the Angels themselves;* and what man, then, shall be able to express it, if the Angels cannot attain to know it. No ignorant grossheads can ever fail in reckoning of this love, for as their own love groweth upon the goodness and perfection of the thing that is beloved; the goodness and perfection of things being the matter that feedeth love, and man being such a base and imperfect creature, touching his body, and a vessel of wickedness, touching his soul; what love can one bear, think they, to such a miserable creature, especially if they consider further, that Thy love is not blind nor passionate? And thus shall they think, though much deceived, that Thy love is but small that

* Ephes. iii. 19.

Thou bearest us, if they suppose that it springeth or groweth upon anything in us, whereas there is neither blindness nor passion in Him that loveth, and the thing to be beloved is so imperfect and miserable, what love can one bear it? But this is not the reckoning we must make in measuring Thy love; for Thy holy love, O Lord, proceedeth, not of any perfection in us, but of the infinite perfection that Thou beholdest in Thy Eternal Father.

Wherefore, if thou wilt consider, O my soul, the love that thy Redeemer beareth unto thee, take this work in hand from the first beginning, and consider the great perfection and inestimable graces granted by the Blessed Trinity to the most sacred Humanity of thy Spouse Jesus Christ at the instant of His Conception. There were then granted unto Him three graces, so great that every one of them in its kind is infinite, to wit, the grace of Divine union, the universal grace which was given Him as the Head of the whole Church, and the essential grace of His Soul.

There was first given to that His holy Humanity to be divine, by conjoining and uniting it with His divine Person, insomuch that to the same Humanity was given a divine essence, and that in some such sort that we may truly say that the same Man is God, and the Son of God, and that He is to be adored in Heaven and in earth as God.

This grace we see now is infinite both for the gift that is given, in that which is the greatest that can be given, seeing God is given therein, and for the manner of giving which is the strongest that can be, being by the way of personal union, and so Christ

is not two persons, but one Person, and an infinite Subject.

There was also given unto that New Man that He should be universal Father and Cause of all men, that as a spiritual Head He might infuse into them His virtue, insomuch that touching His Godhead He is equal to God the Father, and touching His Manhood He is the chief and head of all men, and according to His principality there was given Him infinite grace, that of Him, as of a fountain of grace and sea of holiness, all men might receive grace, and that He should be called Holy of Holies, not only for that He is the greatest of all, and as one would say, a die of holiness, whereof everything is to take His colour and hue, which shall be holy. This grace is also infinite, for it is through all generations, insomuch that it containeth not any determinate number of persons, but may, as touching itself, be multiplied infinitely, and to all that are multiplied therein there remain merits and grace in the blessed Soul of Jesus Christ.

There was given Him further, in particular, another special grace for the sanctification and perfection of this life, which may likewise be called infinite, forasmuch as it containeth all that appertaineth to the state and condition of grace without want of anything in that anything can be added.

There was given Him also at that very instant of His most holy Conception, all the graces *gratis datæ*, to work miracles and wonders as many as He would. And they were all given Him in the highest degree and perfection, for this is that fair flower of beauty whereupon the white dove of the Holy Ghost sat,

and covered it with wings widespread, and most amply poured upon it all His virtue and graces. This is the vessel of election whereinto that running river of all graces, with all its clear streams, came most abundantly flowing, so that not any one drop stayed behind, or passed by, but all entered into it. Here did God bestow on Him the greatest benefits that He could do, and gave Him all that ever He was able to give Him, for He showed Him the utmost of His power and grace, giving all that ever He was able to that most blessed Soul at the very instant that It was conceived. And, above all the rest, there was given at that very instant presently to behold and see the divine essence, and manifestly to know the majesty and glory of the Word wherewith all of it was united, and, in seeing It, to be blessed and full of as much essential glory as It hath now at the right hand of the Father.

If this so great a gift do make thee marvel, add thereunto this other circumstance that is in it, which is, that all this was given of mere grace before all desert, before that same blessed Soul could have wrought any meritorious act whereby to deserve it. All was jointly at one instant, the creation and endowing it with all these graces, for no other respect but that our Lord would amplify and extend His liberality, and beauty upon it, and magnify His grace. Whereupon St. Augustine calleth Christ the pattern and sampler of grace, for as great penmen and painters are wont to set out in their shops some show of their workmanship when they seek to be known, wherein they employ their whole skill to the uttermost of their power, that all the world may know and see that

this they are able to do; so the beauty and magnificence of God determined to create a new creature, and to use towards It, after His manner, all His magnificence and grace, that by the same work the heavens and the earth might know the greatness of their God. King Assuerus made a most solemn banquet to the intent that all his dominions might see the greatness of his riches and power,* and the King of Heaven would make another marvellous banquet to this His sacred Humanity wherewith He was espoused, that all creatures celestial and terrestrial might understand thereby the greatness of His divine bounty and liberality, that He had entered unto such things.

Behold then now, my soul, what a wonderful gift this, and how happy that blessed Soul of thy Saviour hath been that God hath vouchsafed to bestow such grace, and be not envious thereat, but rejoice and be merry, for the grace which He hath received He received not for Himself alone, but for thee also. In His name are those words of Job written, "If I have eaten my meat alone, and the stranger hath not eaten thereof, for even from mine infancy mercy hath grown with me, and from the womb of my mother came forth with me."† So that He eat not one morsel alone, but gave it unto strangers, and as our true Head, He received that which He received not only for Himself, but for His members also.

* Esther ii. 18. † Job xxxi. 17, 18.

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

OF THE BEGINNING AND CAUSE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

RECOLLECT thou therefore now thy thought, O my soul, enter into imagination with thyself, and in silence and solitariness pass forward and consider what part of so great riches as these fall to thy share. Tell me, when that most holy Soul of Jesus Christ, at that happy instant when It was created, and beheld Itself in the state that It was, and knew at Whose hands It had received so great a good, and how He was born a King, and yet won it not with the sword, and found Himself to have sovereignty and rule over all creatures, and saw all the hierarchy of Heaven on their knees before Him,* which at that happy instant, as the Apostle saith, adored Him, tell me, if it be possible to express it, with what exceeding love did this blessed Soul love Him, Who had vouchsafed so to glorify It? And how earnestly would It desire some opportunity to be offered wherein It might be able to gratify and serve such a bountiful Benefactor? Are there any tongues of Cherubim or Seraphim able to express it?

And further to augment this desire, there was said unto Him that the will of God was to seek to save mankind, which had perished by the sin of one man, and that upon His honour and obedience He should take upon Him the charge thereof, and set upon this glorious enterprise; that He should never desist

* Heb. i. 6.

nor be weary till it were finished and brought to an end.

And because the means that all creatures use in working is by love; for all of them work for love of some end that they desire; the love thereof being conceived in the heart, maketh them to labour:—therefore, seeing the Son of God, being made Man, was to take upon Him this work for the redemption of man, it was requisite that He should love them with such a love and affection that for to see them redeemed and restored to their first glory He should offer Himself to do and suffer all that hereunto was necessary. This known, His noble mind, being desirous to gratify His Eternal Father with the redemption of mankind, of His unspeakable love He turned towards men for to love and embrace them upon this His obedience to His Father. As a bullet shot out of a piece of ordnance with much powder, if it chance to rebound back from the place that it striketh, the more strongly it was shot off, with so much the more force it reboundeth; so the love of Jesus Christ, His Soul being sent with such a wonderful force towards God, for that the powder of grace which drove It was infinite, and hitting right in the heart of the Father, rebounded back upon men with such a wonderful force and desire to redeem them, that no tongue nor power is able to express it. This is that force which the Prophet meant when He said, "He hath rejoiced as a giant for to run a race, from the highest heaven was His coming forth, and His return to the highest thereof, neither is there any that can hide himself from His heat."*

* Psalm xviii. 6, 7.

O Divine Love, Thou wentest forth from God, and camest down to man, and returnedst again to God, for that Thou lovedst not man for man's cause, but for God, and Thou lovedst Him in such wise, that whoso considereth this love cannot defend himself from Thy love, because it entereth the heart by force, as Thy holy Apostle saith, "The charity of Christ urgeth us."* This is that fervour and diligence which the holy Church meaneth in the Canticles, where it saith, "Behold with what speed He cometh, leaping over the mountains, and skipping over the hills: my Beloved is like a wild roe, and like a young hart in His swiftness of foot."† The self-same signified the Prophet Isaias when he said, "He shall neither be pensive nor troubled until He establish in the earth judgment and concord, and the islands shall expect His law."‡

Hereupon proceeded those affectionate words which thou utteredst, "If I shall give any sleep to my eyes, or suffer mine eyelids once to close; if I shall take any rest for my temples until I find a place to our Lord and a tabernacle to the God of Jacob."§ This is the fountain and beginning of the love of Christ towards men, if thou desire to know it, for the cause of this love is neither the virtue, nor goodness, nor beauty of men, but the virtues of Christ and of His obedience and His grace, and this unspeakable love of God. Thus much signify those words which He spake unto His Disciples on Holy Thursday, "That the world may know how much I love My Father: arise up now, and let us go from hence."‖

* 2 Cor. v. 14. † Cant. ii. 8, 9. ‡ Isaias xlii. 4.
§ Psalm cxxxi. 5. ‖ St. John xiv. 31.

to the place where He was to suffer on the Cross for man, and behold here, O my soul, the cause of this so exceeding great love. The strong reflection that the beams of the sun do make upon a place, the more vehemently do they scorch. Now the beams of the fire of Thy divine sun, beating right in the heart of God, and reflecting from thence upon men, what a vehement and exceeding heat must they needs cast, no understanding, no not of Angels, can conceive how wonderfully this fire burneth, nor how far the virtue of it extendeth.

Thou requirest, O Lord, that we requite Thee this love with love, and that we love Thee in recompense of that immeasurable love wherewith Thou hast loved and still dost love us. The love that Thou hast borne, and dost bear us, hath put Thee on the Cross, and for to be beloved of us Thou hast yielded Thyself to death. O my good Jesu, I well understand now that which Thou saidst, "I come to put fire in the earth, and what is My desire but that it burn."* I see Thee wholly inflamed in love, and with millions of flames of fire, and innumerable stripes as it were, Thou givest battle to my soul, compassed about on every side with the fire Alquitran, which is Thy holy love. I know not wherefore now it should not yield and render itself into the hands of Thy Divine Majesty, seeing the same can never die, which freely submitteth itself into the hands of Him Who is the true life, according to that which Thou saidst to St. Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life."

* St. John xi. 25.

What fearest thou, my soul? Why defendest thou thyself against Him Whose power is infinite? He is the burning Seraph of love; fear not, but love Him Who requireth nothing but love. If thou fly life, what remaineth there but death; and if thou fearest death, wherefore dost thou not yield, and offer thyself to thy life, Christ Jesus, in Whom, as the Apostle saith, thou hast life, being, and motion? Behold how greatly Thy Spouse, Jesus Christ, doth love thee, and never rest nor stay until thou be wholly converted unto His love, and be inflamed in the pure fire of love, for by duty thou art bound to love Him, Who so wonderfully hath loved and still loveth thee.

SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

THAT THE LOVE OF CHRIST IS WITHOUT END.

OF that nature and quality is the love that Thou bearest us, O our Lord and our Redeemer and the life of our soul, and so profoundly dost Thou love us, that it ended not with Thy death, even the death of the Cross, but proceedeth still forward, for if as Thou receivedst commandment to suffer one death, Thou hadst been commanded to suffer millions of deaths, Thou hadst sufficient love for them all. And if that which Thou wert commanded to suffer for all men in general had been commanded Thee for one man in particular, Thou wouldst have performed all that Thou didst, as well for every one of them as

Thou didst for them all. And if, as Thou wert hanging in terrible pains those three hours on the Cross, it had been needful to have hanged there till the Day of Judgment, and to have suffered new torments and a longer time, Thou hadst love in store for all, and to have performed all, insomuch, O Lord, that Thou lovedst a great deal more than Thou sufferedst, and there remained a great deal more inclosed inwardly in Thy bowels than that which Thou showedst outwardly in Thy wounds.

It was not without great mystery that amongst other particularities of the Temple of Solomon, the Holy Ghost would have this written, to wit, that the windows of the said Temple were wider, and more open withinside than without, and were greater inward than they seemed outward. O Divine Love, how far greater art Thou inward than that Thou seemest outward! So many stripes, so many lashes, and so many cruel wounds, do manifestly declare unto us wonderful great love, yet show they not the whole greatness of Thy love, for far greater without doubt was that love which burned inwardly in Thy sacred breast, than that which here appeared outwardly unto us. The stripes are little sparkles issuing out of that flaming fire, a bough that springeth out of that mighty tree, and a river which floweth from that infinite sea of immeasurable love.

It is the most evident sign of love that can be showed when one giveth his life for another. Now then, if I be so greatly indebted unto Thee, O my God and my Lord, for that Thou hast already done for me, how much more do I owe unto Thee for that

Thou hast desired to do. If this open show be so great which the eyes of all men do so clearly behold, how far greater is that which the eyes of God only can see and discern. O sea of infinite love, O bottomless depth of love, who can doubt, O Lord, of the love that Thou bearest us; who will not esteem himself the richest in the world, seeing He is beloved of such a Lord?

I most humbly beseech Thee, O Saviour, by the bowels of Thy tender mercy, which moved Thee to bestow on me such a singular gift, to give me likewise such eyes, and such a heart, that I may know and feel it, and that I may glory always in Thy mercies, and sing Thy praises all the days of my life.

Now then, if thou wouldst have some taste and savour, O my soul, of the greatness of the love of God thy Lord, and of the desire that He had to suffer for Thee, enter into consideration of the fervent desire that the blessed Saints had to suffer for God, and thereby shalt thou be able in some part to understand the wonderful desire that the same Holy of Holies had, seeing that He excelleth them so much in holiness and grace as the clear light of the sun exceedeth darkness, and a great deal more. Behold the desire that those holy Fathers St. Francis and St. Dominic had, who so longed for martyrdom as the hart doth after the fountains of waters. That glorious St. Dominic wished that all the members of his body had been cut asunder. It seemed to him that one martyrdom only was but a small matter, and therefore desired martyrdom for every member. Behold the desire of that blessed Apostle, St. Andrew, who, beholding the cross whereon he was to suffer, broke

out into sweet communication with it as with his beloved spouse, and requested it joyfully to accept him as willingly as he contented himself with it.

Come we now to another more high martyrdom, and to a new and strange manner of desire, which was that of St. Paul, unto whom all kinds of torments jointly seeming but little to satisfy the love which he bore unto God; he desired the very pains and torments of hell, for the honour of God and salvation of men. "I wished," saith this holy Apostle, "to have been anathema from Christ for my brethren."* He desired herein to be for ever separated from Christ touching the participation of glory, though not touching the grace and love of God.

Take now then unto thee wings, O my soul, for to fly, and climb thou up by this ladder, even unto the Heart of thy Spouse, Jesus Christ, and consider that if this blessed Apostle, having but a little drop of grace only, did bear so great love and tender affection unto men, how much greater must the desire of our Saviour be, which is an infinite sea of grace, seeing His desire is according to His love.

This, O Lord, Thou hast given us to understand in those words when Thou saidst, "I have to be baptized with a baptism, and how am I straightened until I be despatched."† Thy Heart, O Lord, was sore troubled and afflicted, for so great was the desire that Thou hadst to see Thyself for love of us bathed and died in Thine own Blood, that, through the greatness of this love, every hour that it was deferred seemed unto Thee a thousand years; and hereupon

* Rom. ix. 3. † St. Luke xii. 50.

grew that glorious Feast of Palm Sunday, that Thou wouldst have instituted unto Thee, when Thou didst go to thy Passion, to give the world thereby to understand the great joy of Thy Heart, in that Thou wouldst enter into the chamber of the Cross so beset with roses and flowers. It seemed not, O Lord, that Thou goest to the Cross to suffer, but to some place to be espoused, seeing Thou wilt have such a solemn Feast to be made Thee by the way.

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

OF THE EXAMPLE OF LOVE WHICH OUR SAVIOUR GAVE US AT HIS DEATH.

COME ye forth now, therefore, you daughters of Sion, come forth, you devout souls, and you shall "see King Solomon with a garland wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his marriage, and on the day of the joy of his heart."* I find not, O Lord, any other garland but that which Thy mother the Synagogue made Thee upon Good Friday upon the Cross, not of leaves nor of flowers, but of cruel sharp thorns to torment Thy sacred Head; and wherefore then is that called a festival day of the joy of Thy Heart? Do not haply these thorns prick and pain Thee? Yes surely, and that much more than they could any man else in the world, for Thy flesh is most tender, and delicate. But through the greatness of Thy love that Thou barest us, Thou respectedst

* Cant. iii. 11.

not Thine own grief but our remedy, not Thy stripes but the cure of our diseased souls.

If so many years painful service that the Patriarch Jacob endured for to marry with Rachel seemed unto him but few days by reason of the love that he bore her, what shall three hours hanging on the Cross, or one day's suffering, seem unto Thee for to espouse Thee with the Church, and to make her so fair and beautiful that there remain neither spot nor wrinkle about her?

This love moved Thee to die so willingly, this made Thee so drunk that it caused Thee to be hanged naked on the Cross, and to become a derision and scoffing-stock to the world. Thou art the same Noe that plantedst a vineyard, and drunkest of the wine thereof in such abundance, that being drunken with this mighty strong wine of love, Thou fellest asleep on the Cross, and sufferedst such dishonour thereon that Thine own sons were scandalized and scoffed at Thee.

O marvellous Love, Who abasest Thyself to such an extremity; and most strange blindness of men, which take occasion to discredit Thee, by that whereby they ought to have taken cause more entirely to love Thee. Tell me, O sweet Love, if this one spark alone that Thou here showest us outwardly were so fearful unto men that it was to the Jews a scandal and to the Gentiles foolishness,* what would they have done if Thou hadst given them some other example that might have declared the whole greatness of Thy love? For if this one show

* 1 Cor. i. 23.

only, which is less than the love which Thou bearest us, made men beside themselves, and to lose their sight in the midst of the brightness of light, what shall Thy brethren, children, and friends do, that so faithfully believe and perfectly know how far forth further Thy holy love extendeth? This is that which maketh them beside themselves, and ravished, when being recollected into the closet of their heart, Thou revealest these secrets unto them, and makest them to understand and feel them.

Hereupon cometh that their hearts burn and burst asunder. Hereupon cometh the desire of martyrdom, hereupon the rejoicing in tribulations, hereupon their feeling ease upon glowing gridirons, their walking upon hot burning coals, their desire of torments as of banquet, and their taking pleasure in that which the world dreadeth, their embracing that which the world abhorreth, and their seeking to fly the abominations of Egypt for to sacrifice their souls to God.*

The soul that is espoused unto Thee, O Redeemer of the world, and doth willingly join itself with Thee, the Bridegroom of the Cross, esteemeth nothing greater glory unto it than to bear part of the reproaches and injuries of Thee crucified. How shall I be able then, O my Love, to requite Thee this love? That only is a sufficient and worthy recompense where blood is recompensed with blood.† That blood which Moses celebrated in making an atonement between God and His people, and making a covenant with Him, was a figure of this. Part thereof which was poured upon the altar was to pacify

* Exodus viii. 26, 27. † Numb. xxxv. 33; Heb. ix. 22.

God, and that which fell upon the hands of the people was to bind men.

I know, my most sweet Lord, the obligation and bond wherein I stand bounden; suffer me not to break it, nor to wrest myself out of it, but let me be stained with this blood and nailed on the Cross. Make me room, O Cross, and receive my body, and let down that of my Lord. Enlarge thyself, O Crown, that I may put in my head; leave your hold, O nails, of those innocent Hands, and pierce my heart and wound it with compassion and love.

Hereupon Thy holy Apostle saith, that Thou diedst to have dominion of the living and the dead,* not with threats and punishments, but with works of love. Reckon me amongst those that Thou wilt command, dead or alive, and let me become captive under the signory of Thy love. Oh, what a marvellous and excellent kind of fight Thou hast chosen, O Lord, for now Thou hast conquered men, and not with any deluge or fire from heaven, but with the allurements of peace and love; not by killing, but by dying; not by shedding the blood of others, but by giving Thine own for us upon the Cross.

O marvellous and strange Virtue, that Thou wouldst do that on the Cross accompanied with thieves, which Thou wouldst not do in Heaven, where Thou wert served with Angels. So many flakes of fire do invite me to love Thee as I behold wounds in Thy sacred Body for the love of me. Every one of these wounds is a tongue which crieth out to me that I love Thee.

* Rom. xiv. 9.

It shall do well, my soul, that thou bestow thy time in loving Him, Who at all times, and in all places, hath with so great love taken pains to seek thee. O mighty power of divine love, inflame my heart, that I may wholly employ it on Thee, that no other strange love may find place in me. O paradise of the pleasures of God, and temple of peace of souls, receive us fugitives and pilgrims in this vale of miseries.

EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION.

HOW THE CROSS OF CHRIST INFLAMETH OUR SOULS IN LOVE.

O ROBBER and stealer of souls, steal Thou, O Lord, this heart of mine, for in Scripture Thou art called a robber and taker by force and violence. What sword so strong, what bow so stiff and well shot off, that can pierce a perfect diamond? The force of Thy love hath dashed in pieces infinite diamonds. Thou hast broken the hardness of our hearts and hast inflamed all the world in Thy love, according as Thou saidst by the Prophet, "With the fire of My love the whole earth shall be inflamed;"* and in the Gospel Thou hast said, "I came to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled."† Well did that holy Prophet understand the virtue of this coming, and force of this love, which cried out saying, "Would to God Thou hadst now already opened the heavens and come down, and

* Soph. iii. 8. † St. Luke xii. 49.

that the waters burned with fire." O sweet fire, O sweet flame, which so enkindlest the hearts which are colder than snow, and convertest them into love, the cause of Thy coming is to bring this fire from Heaven and to fill the world with love, as the Prophet saith, "Thou hast visited the earth and made it drunken with love." *

O most loving, sweet, beautiful, and merciful Lord, make our hearts drunk with this wine, inflame them with this fire, and wound them with this arrow of Thy love. What wanteth there in this Thy Cross of being a spiritual crossbow, seeing that it woundeth our hearts? A crossbow is made of iron or wood, it is bent with a string, and hath a nut in the midst, whereto the string is plucked up, that the arrow may be loosed with force, and give the greater wound; so Thy most holy Body, hanging at length upon the tree of the Cross, and Thine arms stretched out like a string, in the hole of Thy side, as in a nut, I see the arrow of Thy love put, that from thence it may be loosed and fly forth to wound the heart.

Let all the world now know and understand that my heart is wounded. How wilt thou be healed, O my heart? There is no remedy to cure thee, but thou must die.

When I behold, my good Jesus, the head of the spear come forth of Thy side all bloody, this same spear is an arrow of love that passeth through me, I feel that it woundeth my heart in such wise, that it leaveth no part unpierced. What meanest Thou to do, most sweet love? What meanest Thou to do in

* Psalm lxiv. 10.

my heart? Thou camest thither for to cure me, and now Thou hast wounded me; Thou camest hither for to teach me how to live, and Thou hast made me foolish. O most sweet wound, O most wise foolishness, let me never see myself without thee.

And not only the Cross, but even the very figure that Thou didst bear thereon doth sweetly call us. O loving Lord, and pure fire of love, Thou hast Thy head bowed down to hear us, and to give us a kiss of peace, wherewith Thou unitest all offenders, Thyself being the party offended. Thou hast Thine arms stretched forth to embrace us, Thy hands bored through to give us all good, a wide hole in Thy side for to receive us into Thy Heart, Thy feet fast nailed for to expect and tarry for us, and never to be able to depart or fly from us, insomuch that beholding Thee, O Lord, on the Cross, all that ever mine eyes do see inviteth me to love Thee, and that I never forget Thee. "If I forget Thee, O good Jesu, let me forget my right hand, let my tongue cleave fast to the palate of my mouth, if I be not mindful of Thee and place Thee ever at the beginning of my mirth." *

Behold then, my soul, the cause here declared of the love that Christ beareth us, for this love groweth not of anything that He seeth in man, but of the divine love and desire that He hath to fulfil the holy will of His Father. By the same means, also, thou mayest understand from whence so many benefits and promises proceed, as God hath made unto man, that thereby thy hope may be confirmed and strengthened, seeing upon how firm a foundation

* Psalm cxxxvi. 5, 6.

it is grounded; and as the cause wherefore Christ loveth man is not man but God, so likewise the reason wherefore God hath promised so many benefits unto man, is not man but Christ; the cause wherefore the Son loveth us is because His Father hath so commanded Him, and the cause wherefore the Father so favoureth us is because the Son requesteth and meriteth it.

These are those supercelestial planets by whose marvellous aspect the world is governed, and all influences of grace are sent to the world. Seest thou how strong these bands of love are, no less then are those of our hope. Thou lovest us, O Saviour, because Thy Father commandeth it; and Thy Father pardoneth us because Thou dost request it. Upon this beholding His heart and will it cometh that Thou lovest me, for so doth Thy obedience command it: and upon this beholding Thy Passion and wounds proceedeth our salvation and pardon, for so do Thy merits require it. Behold Ye always One Another, Father and Son; behold Ye One the Other without ceasing, that thereby You may work my salvation.

O sight of excellent virtues! O aspect of supercelestial planets, from whence the beams of divine grace proceed with so infallible certainty; when will such a Son disobey His Father, and when will such a Father not look upon His Son? If the Son then obey I shall be loved, and if the Father behold Him I shall be pardoned. At a sigh which the damsel Axa gave before her father Caleb, her pitiful loving father gave her all that she requested; and what then can such a

Father as this deny at the sighs and tears of such a Son?

When shall the filth of my sins so vilely stink, O my Redeemer, that the sacrifice of Thy Passion shall not smell more sweetly? The beauty of the holy Passion is so great that all the sins of the world jointly together are no more able to defile it than a wart or mole, be it never so little, in a face of singular beauty and fairness. And wherefore then, O faint and discouraged soul, which puttest not thy trust in God in thy affection, wherefore, I say, do thy sins and want of merits make thee cowardly and fearful? Understand that this work lieth not in thy power and endeavour, but in Christ; for if the offence of the first earthly man were the beginning of thy fall, the merit of the second heavenly Man is the beginning and end of thy remedy. Labour to be united with Him in faith and love, as thou art with the other in the bond of affinity; for in so doing, as by thy natural affinity thou art partaker of the fault of the transgressor, so by thy spiritual kindred thou shalt participate of the grace of Christ Jesus; and being thus and in this wise united unto Him, believe thou assuredly that what shall become of Him shall become of thee, and what shall become of the Father shall become of the children, and what shall become of the Head the same shall become also of the members, and as the Gospel saith, "Wheresoever the body is, thither shall the eagles also be gathered together."*

This is that which in figure of this mystery King David spake to a fearful and troubled man, "Join

* St. Matt. xxiv. 28.

thee with me, and look, what becometh of me shall happen to thee, and with me thou shalt be guarded."* Regard not thine own power and strength which will make thee dismayed, but have respect unto this thy Redeemer, and thou shalt recover strength. If in passing over this river thy head do wax giddy looking down upon the stream, lift up thine eyes on high and behold the mercy of Christ crucified, and thou shalt pass safely.

If thou dost verily believe that the Father hath given thee His own and only Son, believe in like manner that He will give thee all things besides, for all is far less than this. Imagine not, my soul, that because He is ascended into Heaven He hath therefore forgotten thee, for love and forgetfulness cannot remain together in one person. He left thee at His Ascension the best pledge that possibly He could, which was the vail of His precious Flesh, in memory of His Passion and love. Behold that not only whilst He lived He suffered for thee, but even when He was dead also He received His greatest wound, which was the thrust of the spear in His side; to give thee thereby to understand that both in life and death He was a true and faithful friend unto thee, as also that when at the time He gave up the ghost He said, "It is finished," that although His pains were ended, yet His love ceased not. "Jesus Christ," saith St. Paul, "yesterday and to-day shall be for ever."† For look, how He was whilst He lived in this world unto those that loved Him, the like is He now and shall be for ever unto such as shall seek Him.

* 1 Kings xxii. 23. † Heb. xiii. 8.

NINETEENTH MEDITATION.

HOW GOD OUGHT TO BE BELOVED FOR THAT HE IS OUR BENEFACTOR.

IF, as a Pagan philosopher writeth, we be never able to requite the gods nor our parents, who do give us only this cottage of abode wherein our soul dwelleth, how much more do I owe unto Thee, the true God and my only Lord, seeing Thou hast given me both soul and body and all that I am? "With the cords of Adam" Thou sayest Thou wilt draw me, "and with the bonds of love;"* these words are the benefits Thou hast bestowed upon Adam and his children. Thou meanest hereby that Thou wilt do such works unto man that Thou wilt draw him unto Thee. If love be a wishing well and doing good to the beloved, we must then say that Thou lovest a man so much as Thou bestowest benefits upon Him, and to him that thou lovest most Thou doth most good. If I would enter into account with myself, and number the benefits that I have received of Thy hands, I should want time, and my life would first be ended before I should be able to make so large a reckoning. Look how many members I have in my body, so many benefits do I find for the which I ought to love Thee.

If a man had lost an eye, how much would he love him that would restore it again? If a man had deserved to have both his eyes put out, how much would he love him that would keep and preserve

* Osee xi. 4.

them? No less ought I to love Him Who hath given me mine eyes, and conserveth them, seeing that many times using them to evil I deserved for to lose them; and so the like for the rest of my members: and how much more were I bounden to love Him Who should raise and revive me being dead.

O Maker of my life, the restorer and preserver thereof, what is there in me that I have not received of Thee? And if there be so great reason for the body and life which Thou hast given me, wherefore should I not love Thee, and that a great deal more, for the reasonable soul that Thou hast created in me, seeing that without all comparison it is much more excellent than is this my mortal and corruptible body? And if this my soul should chance to lose the use of reason, how much would I love him that would restore it? Greatly, therefore, ought I to love Thee, my God, seeing Thou hast given me the use of reason, my soul, body, and life, and dost conserve this union, whereas I many times do deserve death for my sins.

Lift up, therefore, O my soul, all thy thoughts to this unspeakable love of thy God; there is nothing more meet, more profitable, more wholesome, nor more sweet and pleasant than for a man to love Him of Whom he hath received the whole being and conservation that he hath. If thou canst not know and conceive, O my soul, what manner of one He is that so exceedingly loveth thee, consider at least the tokens of love that He hath given Thee. By the gifts that thou hast received, thou shalt understand with what a fervent affection, and with how great care

and diligence thou oughtest for to love Him. His tokens are very rich and excellent, and His gifts noble, for it becometh not a great personage to give trifles.

Oh, open thine eyes, O my soul, and behold the whole heaven, the earth, air, and all the elements and creatures, all which are to serve thee. Thou receivest the benefit, and knowest not Who bestoweth it on thee; for if I mark well, O Lord, and consider Thy dealings towards me, I should see Thee, my God, so busy in bestowing Thy benefits on me, that it seemeth as though, having forgotten all others besides me, Thou busiest Thyself about me alone, and employest Thy whole care only upon me. Thou hast been always unto me a solace and comfort in my adversities, and a guardian and defence in prosperity; which way soever I turned myself, Thy grace and mercy went before me, and when even I was at the pit's brink of perdition Thou didst mightily deliver me. When I erred, Thou didst set me into the right way; when I was ignorant, Thou instructedst me; when I sinned, Thou correctedst me; when I was sad and sorrowful, Thou comfortedst me; when I fell, Thou raisedst me, and standing on my feet Thou stayedst me up; Thou gavest me the grace truly to know Thee, purely to love Thee, sincerely to believe in Thee, and zealously to follow Thee.

O God of my heart, sweetness of my life, and light of my eyes, wouldst Thou have me to love Thee? How shall I love Thee, and who am I for to love Thee? Why should I not love such a noble Benefactor, seeing myself so environed with His gifts?

When the virtuous young Joseph was solicited in Egypt by his lewd and dishonest mistress to condescend to her desires, remembering himself of the benefits he had received of his lord and master, he answered her saying, "My lord hath committed unto me all things in his house, saving thee who art his wife, and how shall I then be able to sin against my lord?"* He said not only, how should I offend my lord, but, how shall I be able: for it seemed unto him impossible to injure him unto whom he was so greatly bound. And how shall I then be able to offend Thee, my God, of Whose bountiful hands I have received so many benefits.

Although my perverse will of her liberty and freedom would cease for to love Thee, I know not how possibly she should be able to offend Him unto Whom she is bound so greatly. Though Putiphar committed the charge of his house to Joseph, yet made he not him lord of it all, seeing he reserved somewhat to himself, as Joseph confesseth; but what hast Thou, my Lord, that Thou hast not freely given me? In giving me Thyself Thou hast given me all good with Thee; and what have I that I have not received of Thee?

The remembrance of so innumerable and high benefits do so enforce me to love Thee, that although I would endeavour to cease loving Thee, I can never bring myself unto it. The Feast of the Paschal Lamb, which Thou commandedst the Jews to celebrate, and all other feasts, tended to this end, to commend unto them the memory of those benefits

* Gen. xxxix. 8, 9.

which they had received at Thy hands. The Feast of the Paschal Lamb was a memorial of their delivery out of Egypt; the offering of the firstborn was in memory of that Thou slewest the firstborn of their enemies in Egypt; the manna which Thou commandedst to be kept in the Ark of the Testament, as Thou saidst Thyself, was in memory of the food wherewith Thou maintainedst the people forty years in the desert; and the twelve stones that Josue took out of Jordan was to the end that the children of Israel might remember for ever the benefits that they had received when he commanded the waters to stay that the people might pass dry foot. By this, and by the Feast of Tabernacles and all other feasts and memories which Thou commandedst to be celebrated, Thou intendedst nothing else but to make the Israelites not to forget the favours which Thou hadst done them, that the remembrance of His exceeding great benefits might awaken their wills to the love of so great a Benefactor.

In Deuteronomy, when Thou commandedst us to love Thee, before Thou gavest this commandment, Thou saidst to Thy people, "I am the Lord Thy God, Who hath brought thee out of the land of Egypt." Thou laidst before their eyes the obligation wherein they were bounden to love Thee, by putting them in mind of the benefits they had received. All Thy gifts proceed of love, and Thou seekest by Thy benefits to bring us to love Thee, Who for infinite causes and reasons art most worthy to be beloved of us.

TWENTIETH MEDITATION.

THAT GOD OUGHT TO BE BELOVED FOR THE BENEFITS THAT HE BESTOWETH ON US.

IF gifts be able to break the stony rocks, thou art harder than the rock, O my soul, if thou relent not and melt not with the love of Thy Lord, seeing thyself so much bound thereunto through the great number of benefits that thou hast and dost hourly receive at His bountiful hands. The dogs, and all other unreasonable brute beasts, do love those that do them good, and do acknowledge and are thankful for the good that is done them; and why then shall I, being a reasonable creature, and created to Thy image and likeness, be worse than brute beasts, not loving Thee continually, my God and Lord, seeing Thou never ceasest to bind me with new and singular benefits?

Thou complainest, O Lord, of this ingratitude and unthankfulness of men by the Prophet Isaias, "The ox hath known his owner, and the beast the manger of his master, but Israel hath not known Me, and My people hath not hearkened unto Me."* As it is natural to every living creature to love itself, and to seek its preservation and being, so is it the property thereof also to love him that doth it good; and inasmuch as this is very natural unto man, the Apostle saith, that "He who doth good works to his enemy casteth coals of fire upon his head"† to inflame him in his love. Thus read we in the Scripture

* Isaias i. 3. † Rom. xii. 20.

that David dealt likewise with his cruel enemy and persecutor Saul, whom with his good works he turned to love him.* O perverse and hard heart of mine, what exceeding great obstinacy is this of thine, that so innumerable benefits of thy God do not mollify and melt thee in His love. How far doth the courtesy and good works of David come behind, being compared to the good works of this Lord! All that ever Thou hast given me, O Lord, was to bind me to love Thee, and to the end I should give Thee my love.

Thou, being King of Heaven and Lord of Angels, hast served me to allure me to pay Thee love for love. O Lord my God and all my weal, how much hast Thou done for to be beloved of us miserable sinners! If Thou hadst but given me leave to love Thee, it had been a great favour that Thou hadst done me, being as Thou art an infinite Majesty, and as I am a seely worm of the earth: and how much more is it then that Thou not only disdainest not to be beloved of me, but also seekest to win my love with infinite and rich gifts and benefits, so great is Thy goodness and mercy.

Thou createdst me for love, for if Thou hadst not loved me, Thou hadst never created me. Thy will is the cause of all things, and if Thou hast created me, it was because Thou wouldst so, and if Thou hadst not created some other, it was because Thou wouldst not.

Moreover, Thou hast not only borne me inward hearty love in creating me, but an excessive great

* 1 Kings xxvi. 17.

love also in redeeming me, and whereas I ought to love Thee because Thou madest me, I ought to love Thee a great deal more for giving me a new being by redeeming me when I was lost. For being brought by sin to a vile and wretched state, and thereby condemned to everlasting fire, Thou framedst and reformedst me anew by way of ransom, about which Thou sentest not an Angel, nor a Seraph, nor a celestial spirit, but Thine own only-begotten Son, coeternal, consubstantial, and coequal unto Thee. O wonderful fervent charity, O marvellous pity and strange case of love, that for redemption of a servant Thou hast sent Thy natural Son to die, and to restore to life a seely worm of the earth made of clay. The Son of God came down from Heaven to suffer death. What caused this? The great love that He bore unto us and to our nature. Thou hast loved me more than Thy temporal life, seeing Thou wouldst die for me; and seemeth it not then, O my soul, that Thou owest tribute of love unto Him Who so much loveth Thee? If thou wert anything, it is meet that thou pay unto thy God so due a debt.

I would demand, O Lord, of Thy Divine Majesty, if I might be so bold, and that it were not to my own prejudice, wherefore lovest Thou, O Lord, so vile a thing, and so imperfect a creature as man is? It falleth out some times that a master loveth dearly some very foul and deformed slave that he keepeth; and if a man should demand this his master wherefore he setteth his love upon so deformed a thing, he would answer that he loveth him because he is beloved of him, and that he serveth him with great

care and diligence, and so would allege some things that he hath done for him.

O Lord, shall I hold my peace or speak? Truly I would hold my peace, but that just cause and reason enforceth me to speak. Thou lovest, O Lord, this miserable servant, defiled with a thousand spots of sin, and Thou, being Who Thou art, and he as he is, Thou despisest not his baseness, nor disdainest not to bestow so rich a jewel as Thy holy love upon so vile a thing. Dost Thou love him haply for that which he hath done for Thee? Dost Thou love him because he loved Thee first? Or for his diligent and careful service? O exceeding goodness and infinite charity of my God, which freely in respect of Thyself only hast so entirely loved us, and with so many and such excellent works hath showed and dost show us the wonderful love that Thou bearest us; and thou, my soul, that lovest an Ethiopian because he loveth thee and hath done somewhat for thee, wherefore lovest thou not thy Spouse, Jesus Christ, Who hath loved thee first, and given His life for thee? As this world, amongst all the gifts of thy God, is the least, that thou thinkest so great, what then shall the greatest gift of all be, seeing this that is least is so great? To say gifts is as much to say as obligations, for that we are bound to our benefactors. Men require at our hands that we be not only thankful for the good that they do us at the very instant that they pleasure us, but also for the good that they have done us aforetime, which they would never have to be forgotten, but that, when the gifts are past, the obligation and band of the debt of thankfulness should

still remain. O most good and bountiful Lord, how great is Thy goodness and mercy, seeing Thou art content if we love Thee whilst actually Thou dost us good. Love thou, O my soul, thy God, but when He tendeth thee gifts from Heaven; and seeing at all times thou receivest these tokens of love at His most bountiful hands, it is surely meet that at all times thou love so magnificent and noble a Benefactor. Love Him at least at the time He doth thee good, and seeing He doth it always, thou ought always to love Him.

The holy King David reckoned up all kinds of benefits, which are in number three, when he saith in the Psalm, "Turn thee, my soul, to thy rest, for the Lord hath done thee good. He hath delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling."* All the good that we receive from anybody is in three sorts, to wit, the good given, the evil from which he delivereth us, and the good promised. The Psalmist toucheth the goods which he received of God when he saith to his soul that it should turn to God for the benefits that it had received of Him. He handles the second kind of good when he saith He had delivered his soul from death and his eyes from tears. He doth us a good turn which delivereth us from some evil before we fall into it, giving us warning of the danger. He speaketh of the good promised, saying that He hath delivered his feet from falling, promising him glory and eternal bliss, where, being confirmed in glory, we shall see God, free from falling into sin and iniquity.

* Psalm cxiv. 7, 8.

And the more to stir up his soul to convert her to God, he calleth the Lord his rest and recreation, where she shall solace and repose herself from travails and miseries, which she suffered serving the world and her passions and appetites. It is meet, then, my soul, that thou turn thee unto God, Who is thy rest and only solace, of Whom thou hast and dost every minute receive so many benefits, seeing that, besides the gifts which He hath given thee, He hath taken thee from sin, delivered thee from hell, and promised thee His heavenly bliss. These three kinds of benefits thou oughtest to meditate upon, discoursing of them through the whole race of thy life, and present them from thy memory to thy understanding and will, that it being inflamed in the love of so bountiful a Benefactor, thou mayest love and serve Him as thou art bound to do. Upon these two verses of the Psalm thou shalt find matter enough at large whereupon to contemplate touching the innumerable benefits that thou hast received of thy God, and that in such sort that, although thou wouldst not love thy Creator for being the chief Felicity, the infinite Goodness, and celestial Beauty, yet shalt thou love Him whether thou wilt or no for the good that He doth thee.

TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

THAT GOD OUGHT TO BE BELOVED BECAUSE HE IS OUR REST.

"TURN thee, O my soul, to thy rest," that is, to thy God, saith the King and Prophet David. If it be natural to every man to love his good and rest, then oughtest thou, O my soul, to cast off and to set aside all things of the earth and business of this world that do encumber and disquiet thee, and, recollecting thy thoughts together, to turn thee unto God, and to settle thy whole care and study upon Him.

Oh, what rest and quietness shalt thou find if, utterly excluding all cark and care, thou put thyself wholly into the hands of thy Spouse, Jesus Christ. Here shall thy tears be dried up; here shall the complaints cease which thou makest of men that greatly molest thee; here shall end all thy sadness, anger, toil, and travail; and here shalt thou find inward peace and mirth of heart, and a paradise upon earth. Thou sufferest many griefs, going wandering and distracted with worldly vanities, and, desiring rest, thou wilt not have it when thou mayest find it without moving thy foot. The dove of Noe found no place to rest on out of the ark, and so necessity enforced her to return unto it.

Thou shalt not find, my dove, any rest out of the hands of the true Noe, Jesus Christ, and therefore turn thee unto Him, in Whom consisteth thy rest. In

seeking of rest thou forsakest thy God, unto Whom thou must of force return if thou wilt find what thou seekest. Thou must, whether thou wilt or no, return unto Him Whom thou hast offended, as did the prodigal son to his father. Jonas fled from God, and flying, found nothing but a storm and tempest on the sea, but returning and coming back to Him that He had forsaken, he found rest and a safe harbour. Agar departed from the house of her master, Abraham, and went wandering in the desert well-nigh perished and dead for thirst, but the Angel commanded her to return to the house of Abraham, where she had life and pleasure.

Cast off then, my soul, this good and that good, and turn Thee unto Him which is the true Good. Love thou not this or that good, to wit, which hath end and measure, but love thou that Good which is infinite and without all measure. Seek thou not this or that sweetness, but seek and love that Sweetness which of itself is subsistent. Love thou not this or that beauty, but Beauty itself; not this or that good, but the chiefest Good. If thou seek sweetness and delight, seek it not in fruits, nor in honeycombs, nor in bread, nor in flesh, nor in any other meat nor particular nature, but seek the very true Delight and Sweetness which is of itself and dependeth of nothing, which is not the sweetness of one thing, but is only Sweetness and wholly Sweetness. In like manner, if thou seekest beauty, seek it not in the sun, nor in the moon, nor in the stars, nor in man, nor in the heavens, nor in garments, nor in gold, nor in silver, nor in precious stones, but seek thou the true Beauty, for He

is not the beauty of this thing or that thing, but simply Love itself, which is not a mixed creature, but the whole essence of beauty; and this Sweetness, Goodness, and pure Beauty must needs be infinite and immeasurable.

Oh, how shall we be satisfied with satiety and fulness, and how wilt thou be at rest, my soul, with Rest itself? Who were able to express, although he had a hundred tongues and as many mouths, what a pleasant taste the very perfect Taste itself hath, and how delectable relish and delight it is? Oh, how will Mirth itself make me merry, and how will the perfection of all Goodness fill me with all good? If the honeycomb be sweet for the sweetness that is in it, how much more sweet shall Sweetness itself be? If bread have a good taste for that it is well seasoned, how far better taste shall the perfect Taste itself be? If gold delight for the beauty that the workman hath wrought in it, how much more, then, shall Beauty itself delight?

Let him boast who listeth, and vaunt that he hath laboured from morning and borne the weight of the day and of the heat;* and let another praise himself, saying that he is not like unto other men, and that he hath fasted two days in every week;† but unto me it is good, O Lord, to come nigh unto Thee and to put my hope in Thee.‡ Some trust in their sciences and sharpness of wit, in their nobleness of blood, in their worship, honour, and vanities of this world, but I have esteemed all this as muck and dung,§ for that Thou, O Lord, art my hope and my sure refuge. Let them

* St. Matt. xx. 12. † St. Luke xviii. 12. ‡ Psalm lxxii. 28.
§ Phil. iii. 8.

put their hope in the uncertainty of riches,* but I trust in Thy word, for love whereof I have despised all things. Thou sayest that we should first seek the Kingdom of Heaven, and that all other things shall be given us.† "The poor is left unto Thy charge, and Thou wilt be a helper of the orphan."‡ "If an army of men should arise against me, in Thee only will I hope,"§ for Thou, O Lord, art my rest, my refuge, and my only good.

Cast off then, my soul, this good and that good, and enjoy the true goodness itself, that is, the very subsistent substance of goodness, of the which and by the which everything is good that is good. This is that which thy God promiseth and performeth to His friends and elect: not rewarding them with any other good, but with true good and goödness itself. Hereupon it is that when Abraham demanded of God what He would give him for all his travail, it was answered him, "O Abraham, I will be thy reward,"‖ this shall be the wages for thy work, and the reward for thy labour.

Turn thee then, according to the counsel of the Psalmist, unto thy rest; turn thee unto thy God and Lord, for in Him alone shalt thou find in the highest perfection all that ever thou goest about begging of miserable poor creatures. Love thy God, therefore, for thine own weal and profit, seeing that in Him alone is thy true rest and recreation.

* Psalm li. 9. † St. Matt. vi. 33. ‡ Psalm ix. 14.
§ Psalm xxvi. 3. ‖ Gen. xv. 1.

TWENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

OF THE BENEFIT THAT GOD HATH BESTOWED ON US IN GIVING US HIS SON.

AMONGST the innumerable benefits that we have received at Thy bountiful hands, O our God and our Lord, the chief, and whereby Thou hast most clearly showed the immeasurable love that Thou bearest us, is, in giving us Thy only-begotten Son: for, as saith the holy Apostle, "He Who hath given us His Son, how shall He not give us all other things with Him?"* How will He deny us that which we demand of Him, Who hath so liberally given Himself, and with Himself all good? And if benefits received do bind men to love their benefactors, beginning to reckon the benefits done unto me, if it were possible to reckon that which passeth all account and is without number, I will first consider how much Thou hast given me to be beloved of me, in giving Thyself for me; this gift proceeding of pure love, according as Thou saidst Thyself to Nicodemus, "So much God loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son."† This is the chief good, the infinite and most divine good, that Thou couldst bestow upon us, to give us Thy Son, in witness and token of the unspeakable love wherewith Thou lovest us.

The Incarnation of Thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ, by appointing Him to be made Man in our mortal and passible flesh, was the means and flowing fountain of infinite graces. This lecture am I to read over with

* Rom. viii. 32. † St. John iii. 16.

the same eyes, and with that consideration that Moses saw the fiery bush, wherein was figured the work of this mystery; for like as the fire showed itself amongst the thorns of the bush without burning or wasting it, even so hast Thou joined our humanity to the divine Person of Thy Son without consuming it, from whence flamed the fire of Thy infinite love. In fire, likewise, was this wonderful work foreshowed by the Prophet, for in the midst of a fire he saw a figure of election ;* which is the finest kind of gold, to signify the glory and excellency of our humanity which shined with marvellous virtues and miracles, and was exalted above all things created. This mystery is showed in fire, and in the midst thereof, because this divine work floweth from that heavenly fire of love which Thou hast borne unto us, and so ought I to consider of it, and to approach unto it, as to a fire to receive the heat of divine love which may overcome the coldness of my heart.

The more that I look into this lesson, the nearer I see myself to come about this fire whereby Thy holy love ought to be more increased in my heart. For to enkindle it in the glowing coals of the fire of love, here shall my heart repose and stay without going forward, and from hence it shall draw divine riches unto it till it come to the end of my desires.

The first firebrand of love that here is given me is to behold the time wherein this benefit was promised unto man, and the end wherefore it was granted. Amongst many other revelations given to the holy Prophet, foreshowing that Thou, O Lord, wouldst

* Ezech. i. 27.

give us Thy only-begotten Son, one most principal is that of Isaias, when he went to King Achaz. This most wicked King was in great distress, and Jerusalem ready to be destroyed, and Thou purposing to deliver it didst send unto him the Prophet Isaias with embassy of so great a benefit; and to the end that he might be sure of Thy divine promise, the Prophet gave him election to choose any sign in heaven or in earth, that the same being come to pass and fulfilled he might assuredly know that Thou wouldst deliver him in deed as the Prophet told him, and so be out of all the fear he was in. The wicked King thought within himself that if he should require any miracle in the heaven, as that the sun should stay or turn backward, or in hell as that some dead bodies should be raised to life, or that the earth should open, that God would be thereby glorified, and that his people would convert unto Him and worship Him as true God; which he not willing for to have come to pass, but endeavouring to let and hinder it, chose rather to remain still in fear and danger than to ask any sign or miracle. Then Isaias lifted up his voice, and full of the zeal of the honour of God, said, "Thou makest light account to anger the servants of God by imprisoning, racking, and putting them to death, and yet thinkest thou not this enough but that also thou wilt be enemy and opposite to God's own Person in hindering the testimony of His divinity. Therefore the Lord Himself shall give thee a sign, wherein He shall be glorified and magnified much more than by any honour and praise that this people could give Him by converting unto Him. Behold, give ear, and

see that a Virgin shall conceive and bring forth a Son, Who shall be called Emmanuel, which is as much to say, God with us."* O wonderful word is this, which saith therefore ; what meaneth this therefore ? Wherefore shall God be made man ? Because man will not seek His honour and glory, but endeavoureth to hinder it even with danger of his life ; therefore Thou wilt, my God, bestow on him the greatest of all gifts, and the greatest that man is able to receive, that is Thy only-begotten Son made very perfect Man.

Wherefore, O Lord, proceedeth this great bountifulness that Thou showest to the world, but of that infinite charity and love of Thine, seeing that the greatest of all gifts is promised and foreshowed at such a filthiness of sin. What should the Prophet of right have said when the man had sought to let and hinder the honour of God ? It had been very meet surely that he should have commanded the earth to open and to swallow up quick into hell the workers of such iniquity ; yet doth he not so, but promiseth that the heavens shall open, and that God shall come down upon earth, and be made very perfect Man, insomuch that if thou consider, O my soul, the Incarnation of Thy Spouse, Jesus Christ, revealed by the Prophet Isaias, and contemplate it likewise at that first instant that the first man offended his Creator, thou shalt find it always in the midst of the fire of love.

Adam sinned against the Divine Majesty, and we with him ; the honour and glory of God was hindered, which ought so much to have been magnified

* Isaias vii. 14.

in the life of men, and thereby our translation to the paradise of His Kingdom without ever dying; yet dealt not God hereupon about our condemnation, but seeing the counsel of His divine love thus hindered towards those that were to be saved, the Eternal Father offered His Son.

Weigh well what God the Father said at the instant when Adam sinned: Seeing there is a stop or stay made to the glory of man, which I love so dearly, I offer mine only-begotten Son, that He may die and pay the debt of his sin and of all others. He should of right be made man, immortal and impassible, as is meet for the only-begotten of the Father, but I will send Him in form of a servant like unto His brethren, that He may die and they be saved.

TWENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

OF THE LOVE THAT GOD BORE US IN GIVING US HIS SON.

THE Evangelist St. John, going about to declare unto the world the great love that Thou bearest it, O most merciful and loving Lord, writeth that Thou lovedst it so much that Thou gavest Thine only-begotten Son. There was no other cause wherefore Thou enforcest so singular a benefit upon the world as Thy Son, but the great love that Thou didst bear unto it.

If we look Who it is that loveth, we shall find that

it is Thou, my God, and that which Thou lovest is the world, and the thing that Thou gavest it in token of Thy love that Thou bearest it, Thy only-begotten Son. He that loveth art Thou, O Lord, Who art God, the chief felicity, the infinite goodness, incomprehensible, unspeakable, omnipotent, Whose centre is all place, and Thy circumference and end in no place. And Thou, O Lord, Who art without beginning and without end, Who proceedeth not of anything, of Whom all things do depend and receive their being, even Thou lovest the world. If the Evangelist had said that Thou lovedst the Angels, it had been no great matter, seeing the Prophet saith of them, that they are Thy ministers and servants which do Thy will. If he had said that Thou lovest just men, because they keep Thy commandments, we would not have marvelled at it, but we cannot choose but greatly wonder that Thou vouchsafest to cast Thine eye upon the rebellious world, transgressing Thy precepts, and that Thou lovest the world which breaketh Thy divine commandments. Well, He that loveth is God, and the thing beloved is the world. Behold the difference and inequality between the one and the other, between God and the world, and the world and God.

Thou hast much debased Thyself, O Lord, in placing Thy love upon the world. That besides the unequalness in quality of nobility, so that it could no ways deserve this love, it was also unworthy of it by reason that it was become evil through sin, for the world is as much to say as frailty and sin; and thus doth the world in Scripture signify, and sin is as

much to say as sinners, and sinners as the enemies of God, and the enemies of God as worthy of hell; and thus, although He abhor sins, He loveth sinners.

O strange and wonderful case of love, that God, being as He is, should love the world such as it is; and Thou, my God, being so great, such is Thy goodness that Thou disdainest not to love the world that was lost and perished, and to give it Thy only-begotten Son, in token of the immeasurable love that Thou bearest it. This Thy holy Apostle meant when writing to the Romans he saith, "God commendeth His charity in us because when as yet we were sinners Christ died for us."*

Thou commendest Thy love in loving men, and not so much in this as in loving and dying for them being sinners, and Thine enemies. God loved us so much, we being His enemies, that He sent His Son to be put to death for our ransom and redemption. If we consider the quantity of this love, it cannot be expressed. "So much," saith St. John, "God loved the world." How much? No man is able to express the quantity of this "so much;" the quantity of this love is surely unspeakable, and therefore he wanted words to declare it, being without all end and measure. When anything is so great that it cannot be given us to understand it by words, the Scripture is wont to express it by this word, "so." The great grief that the Blessed Virgin endured those three days that she had lost her only-begotten Son is declared by this word, "so," when she saith, "Son, why hast Thou *so* done to us?"† The weariness which our Lord

* Rom. v. 8, 9. † St. Luke ii. 48.

endured when, tired with His journey, He sat Him down at the fountain near unto Sichar, and when that woman of Samaria came unto Him, the Evangelist writeth down, saying, "Jesus, wearied of His journey, sate *so* upon the fountain."* That great and divine virtue which our Redeemer showed upon the Cross when with a mighty voice He gave up the ghost, St. Mark expresseth it, saying, "The Centurion that stood over against Him, seeing that *so* crying He had given up the ghost, said, No doubt this Man was the Son of God."†

O love greater than either heaven or earth or all that ever God created, for all is but a cypher in comparison of this love, that exceeding love, that infinite and bottomless sea of love wherewith Thou lovedst us, the Evangelist concludeth in this word, "so." *So* He loved it, *so* much He loved it, and *so* much He esteemed it, that no man is able to express the quantity of this love, for He loved it so that no tongue is able to utter, no heart to conceive, the greatness of this love; and, therefore, to declare the great love that Thou bearest us, the Evangelist measureth the love by the gift that Thou givest us, which was so great that neither weight nor measure is able for to weigh or measure it. Thou gavest us Thy only-begotten Son. This gift is equal to Thyself, being Thy delight and substance, Thy essence, Thy goodness, and Thy riches, and so great was the gift that it was God Himself: the love then was as great as the gift.

Thou lovedst, O Lord, the world with a love which

* St. John iv. 6. † St. Mark xv. 39.

was God, Thou lovedst us, O Lord, as Thy only-begotten Son, seeing that Thou gavest Him for love unto us. "Who is man that Thou lovedst him so much, or what is man that Thou so greatly esteemest him, and settest Thy Heart upon him?"* "All flesh is hay, and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field, and like unto vanity;"† and yet ceaseth not miserable man for all this to offend his God, and being as he is, and man as Thou seest.

And to the end that no man might think that Thou lovest us inwardly with Thy Heart, and in words only, the Evangelist showeth the infinite love that Thou bearest us in that Thou gavest Thy only-begotten Son to the world, all that ever Thou wert able to do, and gavest it as much as Thou wert able to give it. Abraham did many services unto Thee, for he forsook his country and parents, and as, saith Thy Apostle, "He believed with hope and against hope that Sara might conceive,"‡ yet for all this, when he offered his son in sacrifice, Thou didst so thankfully accept this service, that Thou seemedst as it were to forget all the former, and saidst unto him, "Now know I that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not spared thine only-begotten son for love of Me."§

Abraham had very diligently served Thee aforetime, but now Thou sayest Thou knowest his goodness, seeing that he offered his only-begotten son to be executed for love of Thee, for all the former never came nigh so great a testimony of love as the

* Job vii. 17. † Isaias xl. 6; Psalm cxliii. 3, 4.
‡ Rom. iv. 18. § Gen. xxii. 12.

presenting of his son to death for love of Thee. O Lover of our souls, my God, and sweetness of my life, now know I, my God, how much Thou lovest me, seeing Thou hast not pardoned Thine only-begotten Son for love of me.

Consider, then, my soul, whether these be not true signs and very certain tokens of the infinite love that thy God beareth thee. O great bounty and liberality of God, that, having but one Son, and He so beloved, God would give Him to the world, and that not by loan, but by gift outright. So saith the Prophet Isaias, speaking of the time of His birth wherein He was given, "A Child is born unto us and a Son is given us,"* and even unto death hath God given Him to man, that man may do with Him what he listeth. This is that which St. Luke saith, that the President Pilate, after he had determined to put to death the Author of life, committed Him to the will of His enemies, to do with Him what they would.†

Behold, man, how thou art as much owner of God as of anything of thine own, and He is thine, and so yielded unto thee that He will not so much as die without leave of thee. O inestimable work of love, that, to give life unto a servant, He gave over to death His only-begotten Son, and, in testimony of the infinite love that He bore us, He gave us this Son, not lending Him, but freely giving Him unto us.

* Isaias ix. 6. † St. Luke xxiii. 25.

TWENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

HOW GREAT WAS THE LOVE IN GIVING US HIMSELF.

O GREAT and unspeakable magnificence of Thy charity towards men, my Lord. Wonderful fire of love, it is wonder that our hearts break not asunder at so great charity, for what shouldst Thou have done of right, my Lord, after once we had sinned, but presently have thrown us down into hell, as Thou didst the Angels that offended Thee?* And then, if it had pleased Thee, my Lord, Thou mightest very well have created some more noble creature, that night and day would have served Thee. What love was this, good God, that, being invited by our fall, which caused Thy displeasure, Thou camest seeking us out with so great care and diligence, and after our fall and offence vouchsafest to exalt us a great deal more than before? What was this, and from whence proceeded so great good, seeing that our fault deserved extreme punishment? All this proceeded of the pure fire of love.

The thing that most moveth my heart for to love Thee is deeply to consider the love that Thou hast borne us. Love doth more cause one to be beloved than the benefits received, for he that bestoweth a benefit upon another giveth him somewhat of that he hath, but he that loveth giveth all he hath without reserving anything to himself for to give. Let us see, then, O Lord, whether Thou lovest us, and how great the love is that Thou bearest us. Fathers do tenderly love their children, and dost Thou haply love us as a

* 2 St. Peter ii. 4.

father? We have not entered into the secrets of Thy heart to know it, but Thy only-begotten Son, which descended from Thy bosom, is He that brought us news thereof, and commanded us to call Thee Father for the great love that Thou bearest us, and said, moreover, that we should call none other father upon earth,* because Thou alone art our Father; for as Thou only art good for the excellence of Thy sovereign goodness,† so Thou only art our Father, and in suchwise art our Father for the good deeds that Thou dost us, that in comparison of Thy inward fatherly love no other can be called our father.

This Thy Prophet knew right well when he said, "My father and my mother have forsaken and forgotten me, but our Lord hath received me."‡ Thou Thyself wouldst be compared unto parents, saying, by the Prophet Isaias, "Is there haply any woman that forgetteth her little infant, and loveth not the child of her own womb?"§ It is possible that she may forget herself, but I will never be forgetful of Thee, for in My hands have I Thee written, and Thy walls are ever before Me; and because of all birds the eagle is most famous for loving her young ones, Thou comparest, O Lord, Thy love with the love of her, saying, "As the eagle defendeth her nest, and stretcheth out her wings abroad for her young ones, taketh them upon herself and beareth them on her shoulders, even so have I been thy guide and thy refuge."‖

Of this love is that said of the bridegroom to the

* St. Matt. xxiii. 9. † St. Luke xviii. 19. ‡ Psalm xxvi. 10.
§ Isaias xlix. 15. ‖ Deut. xxxii. 11.

spouse, that "For this cause man shall leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."* But Thy love exceedeth this love, for as Thou sayest by the Prophet Jeremias, "If the husband turn the wife out of doors, and, being so cast out, doth afterwards join himself with another, will she haply return to him again? But thou hast played the adulterer with as many friends as thou likedst, and yet for all this turn thee unto Me, saith our Lord, and I will receive thee."† But if thou wilt not for all this give credit to this love, behold all the benefits that He hath done for thee, for all of them are tokens and testimonies of love. Cast thine account how many they are, and thou shalt find that as many creatures as are in heaven and earth, as many bones as thou hast in thy body, as many hours and moments as thou hast of life, all and every of them are benefits of our Lord.

And behold, in like manner, how many good inspirations thou hast received at the hands of that God, how many good things thou hast had in this life, from how many sins He hath delivered thee, and into how many diseases and misfortunes thou mightest have fallen if He had not defended thee, and that all these things are signs and tokens of love; yea, not so much as the very scourges and tribulations that He sendeth thee, but are arguments of His love, for they show the heart of the same Father which chastiseth every child that He receiveth for to reform and awaken him, to purge him from evil, and preserve him in all good.

* St. Matt. xix. 5. † Jer. iii. 1.

Thou, threatening Thy beloved people of Israel unless they keep Thy commandments, didst say by the Prophet, "If the children forsake My law and walk not in My judgments; if they profane My justice and keep not My commandments, I will visit their wickedness with a rod and their sins with scourges." Yet to show that this chastisement was of a loving Father, and that Thou forgettest not accustomed mercy, Thou addest, saying, "Yet will I not take away My mercy from them, neither will I condemn them in My justice."*

And when Thou didst chastise Adam as a Father, casting him out of the paradise of delights, Thou madest him a garment to defend him from the heat of summer and to shroud him from the cold of winter.† O most merciful and loving Lord, that, even in the afflictions and scourges which Thou sendest us, dost show the great love that Thou bearest us. Again, if I cast mine eye and look upon this world, I see that all was made for me and for love of me only, and that all things therein do preach love and signify love.

And if at all these things thou be deaf, my soul, yet it is not meet that thou be deaf at the loud cries that our Saviour maketh unto thee in the Gospel. "So God loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that every one that believeth in Him perish not, but may have life everlasting."‡ All these things are tokens of love, and this more than all things besides, as writeth that beloved and lover of God, His Evangelist St. John: "In this hath the charity of God appeared in us, because God hath sent His only-

* Psalm lxxxviii. 31—34. † Gen. iii. 21. ‡ St. John iii. 16.

begotten Son into the world that we may live by Him;"* and this benefit, with the rest, are signs of the love that He beareth us, and, as it were, sparkles that leap out of that infinite and flaming fire of love.

How much greater, thinkest thou, that hidden fire must needs be, seeing the sparks that leap out of it are so great? O infinite love! O love great and gracious, and worthy to be gratified and requited with love! Grant us, O Lord, with all Thy Saints, to feel the height, depth, and breadth, and wideness of this love, that our heart may on all parts be wounded and vanquished with so great love.

TWENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

OF THE EXCELLENCY OF THE LOVE OF GOD.

THE charity, O most merciful Lord, wherewith Thou lovest is a virtue, in respect of all other virtues like gold in comparison of other metals; for as gold excelleth all other metals in value, estimation, and beauty, so doth charity, in perfection and excellency, exceed all other virtues, which, if they be not engraven with charity, are little or nothing worth. This doth Thy holy Apostle very well declare, saying, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of Angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass."† Other virtues are of no value without charity, and all of them have their dependence of charity, and

* 1 St. John iv. 9. † 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

it dependeth of none but includeth alone all other virtues: it giveth life unto faith, it trusteth firmly with hope, it suffereth with patience, it vanquisheth with fortitude, it hath compassion with mercy, it is silent with meekness, it distributeth with liberality, and finally it exerciseth all the virtues; for as the Apostle saith, "Charity is patient, is benign; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh not evil, rejoiceth not upon iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth, suffereth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, beareth all things."* All these are the proper effects of other virtues, which charity hath annexed unto it, as we see by experience in natural love and in worldly love also. When one friend loveth another dearly, he by and bye crediteth him, and trusteth him with all that is his, he giveth him all that he hath, and forgiveth him any grudge that he hath borne him or displeasure he hath done him; he envieth not the good that any other doth him; he laboureth to content and please him; he offereth him no injury; he taketh great pains for his beloved; he adventureth any danger; and the pain and sorrow that he endureth at the other's grief is greater than the very grief and passion that he suffereth himself; and so if the same person with whom he is in love be void of mirth, he becometh exceeding sad; if he have not his health, he is more sick; if he be poor, he is not rich; if he see him in adversity, himself is afflicted.

And seeing that worldly love worketh this effect in the subjects wherein it resteth, how much more

properly shall the divine love work its effect, if the subject be disposed and made apt by preventing grace, and the end be the chief felicity, which is God, from whence floweth all perfection. O mighty strength, excessive power, and wonderful force of love, what is there, although it seem impossible, that Thou canst not do; and what thing so hard that Thou attemptest not? O most potent Love, which art stronger than death, and so much stronger than all strong things, as Thou art of greater power than all powerful things, how much more sweet and gentle than anything in the world.

O wonderful force of love, which not with sword, nor with weapons, nor with armed hand, but with a sweet meekness and meek sweetness holdest all things under thy subjection, and in a wonderful sort enforcest the world to serve thee, and takest tribute of all things. Well know we, O Lord, how wealthy, abundantly stored, and rich Thy house is, and how full of divine things and riches; yet is there not amongst all Thy heavenly treasures any greater treasure than Thy holy love, nor anything more precious nor gorgeous, nor more to be desired; and seeing it is so, the greatest favour and benefit that Thou canst do unto man is for to give him this Thy holy love. Let him ask whoso will at Thy hands, my God, the gift of wisdom, let him ask the gift of prophecy, let him ask humility and charity and what else he liketh; for my part, I require nothing but Thy divine love, for whoso hath this hath all things.

This is the greatest good that can be desired, and he greatest gift that can be given, and the reason

hereof is because any gift that can be given me, or any benefit that can be granted me, I esteem it all as nothing if Thou deny me Thy divine love, whereby I am to possess Thee, for love is of such power that it maketh Thee, O Lord, to be mine, my possession and mine inheritance; and he that hath all that he possesseth, if he have not the love of God, he hath not the fruition of God. The heavenly fruition of Thee and Thy holy love are so linked in brotherhood, that there can be no fruition of Thee where is no love. And what availeth to possess all that can be possessed if we possess not Thee, my God? For as Thou canst not give anything of greater value than Thyself, no more canst Thou give any other thing more precious than Thy love, seeing that therewithal Thou givest Thyself in possession. It is possible by Thy absolute and mighty power by art so to divide the love and the sight that the Saints have of Thee, and that the one should see Thee and not love Thee, and the other love Thee and yet not see Thee, but have knowledge of Thee; for unless he know Thee he could not love Thee. It is manifest that in such a case as this, neither of them were blessed, for he that seeth Thy divine majesty enjoyeth not the felicity that he seeth, because he loveth not; and he that loveth and seeth Thee not can never be at rest and quietness until he see plainly that which he loveth; and happiness there cannot be where we enjoy not our desire.

And albeit neither of these two contain perfect felicity, which consisteth in love and vision both jointly together, yet, if I might have my choice, I

would rather choose to love Thee and not see Thee than to see Thee and not love Thee; for not loving Thee, I could not wholly possess Thee, nor enjoy Thy friendship; and loving Thee, although I see Thee not, I might be Thy friend, and please and content Thy divine majesty, which to do without love is impossible.

O chief Good and infinite Goodness, give me Thy holy love, and do with me what Thou pleasest. Be not afraid then, my soul, for that this chariot of Elias is of fire, which is Thy holy and burning love, which taketh the souls by force and carrieth them up into Heaven,* seeing the children of Babylon were not afraid of it, but entered boldly into this fire, and their bonds being burned, and they let loose and at liberty, went singing and praising God in all creatures.†

This fire of holy love burneth not, but shineth and giveth light. It burneth, and burneth not, for it burneth the bands, wasteth the cords, consumeth tribulations, and taketh away the chains of sins, but it burneth not so much as the hairs of the head of the children, which are made innocent and clean in the burning flames of pure love of our Saviour and merciful sweet Jesus; whereat (as another Nebuchodonosor) our enemy the devil doth very much marvel. Such is the power and force of the divine fire of love, that, purging the sensuality, maketh it spiritual and lifteth it up to take pleasure in Thee, O Lord, according to that which the holy Prophet saith, "My heart and my flesh shall delight in the living God."‡

* 4 Kings ii. 11. † Dan. iii. 24. ‡ Psalm lxxxiii. 3.

It is a great matter for the flesh to have mounted up to so high a spiritual degree, and to be so subject to the spirit as together with the soul to take the fruition of Almighty God. But the great force of love can do all things, which, before the resurrection (at which time the spirit shall have absolute and entire dominion over the flesh), this holy love beginneth to give a taste of that desired day, making truce for a time between these two enemies, the spirit and the body, the war between which proceedeth of sin.

TWENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

OF THE BENEFIT OF THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST.

THOU knowest right well, O Lord, that likeness is a cause of love, and that there is no liberty of love between different subjects, being not in some proportion alike. O infinite goodness of my God, and what tongue is able to express the things that Thou hast done for to be beloved of such a vile little worm of the earth as I am. Thou bestowedst innumerable benefits upon man before Thy Incarnation, that being drawn and allured with so many favours, and seeing himself so much bounden for so many good turns, he might settle his love upon so bountiful a Benefactor.

And seeing that all this would not avail to make him to love Thee, Thou wouldst make Thyself like unto him, and become very man as he was, that by this

means Thou mightest purchase and win his love. There was before some likeness betwixt us, but in many things we were far different, and of distant and contrary properties; for Thou, O Lord, wert impassible, ineffable, immortal, infinite, incomprehensible, and eternal, and we were passible, visible, mortal, comprehensible, temporal, and earthly; but the charity and love that Thou bearest us was so unspeakable that being He that Thou art, Thou vouchsafest to become the same that we are by receiving our human nature in Thy divine Person, and making Thee Man as we are, mortal, passible, visible, and like unto us, that Thou mightest be loved of us.

Thou art even now present and visible in that humanity which Thou then receivedst, and when it was requisite that for my redemption and life Thou shouldst absent Thyself from me and after Thy death ascend up to Heaven, and there sit at the right hand of the Father, taking away from my sight Thy corporal presence; then, at Thy departure, Thou didst institute the most blessed Sacrament of the Altar, to the end that having always Thy corporal presence before mine eyes, I might never forget Thee.

Thou being God, showest Thyself in the world a true and perfect Man, in the similitude of the flesh of sin, in the pains that Thou sufferedst by it, although not in the fault, from which Thou wert altogether free; like unto the flesh of sin in the pangs and death that sin brought into the world, all which Thou sufferedst though Thou never deservedst it then.

In this manner didst Thou overcome sin and death with sin, which by means of sin entered into the world, as though one should set afire a tree with the boughs of the same tree, for, as saith Thy Apostle, "Even of sin grew the destruction and damnation of sin."*

O good Jesu, how far greater reason have we to sing Thy praises than those women had who sung the noble acts of David for cutting off the giant's head with his own sword!† Thou, O Lord, enteredst the lists with the proud and furious devil with whom no man durst encounter, and with the staff of Thy Cross and Passion, more than of stone, dissembling the weapons of Thy divinity, Thou hast beaten him down and cut off his head with his own Alfage, which is pain and death, the effects of sin, and hast pardoned sin in flesh by yielding Thy most holy Flesh to pains and death, whereby Thy glory was the greater and the disgrace of Thine enemy the more shameful.

In this Thou hast showed the great love that Thou bearest us, and hast declared to the world Thy high and mighty power. When a knot is well knit, the more that one plucks at both ends, the harder it closeth. So Thou, O Lord, being our God, hast knit Thyself with our nature, so that death drawing the ends, the knot of love then more firmly closeth, never able to be loosed; for that which Thou once receivest Thou never forsakest, but even the most of all didst show the immeasurable love that Thou didst bear us, insomuch that they which once cleave unto Thee by

* Rom. viii. 3. † 1 Kings xviii. 6.

love, will first lose their lives and perish than leave or let loose their Love.

What hast Thou been able to do for us, O Lord, that Thou hast not done? Thou being inaccessible, and our sins having locked up Heaven, and we not able with the heavy weight of offences to climb up to Thee, Thou hast vouchsafed, most merciful Lord, to come down unto us in humble flesh, that we might approach unto Thy Divine Majesty and enjoy Thy mercies. When a fiery bull runneth loose without hold in a plain field, few dare to come nigh him; but if afterward he be hampered and fast tied, every one draweth to him without fear. Before that Thou tookest flesh, O Lord, and cladst Thyself with our mortality, as to a brave bull no man durst to come nigh Thee, and therefore said Moses to the people of Israel, that nobody, neither man nor beast, should come near the foot of the mountain where Thou wert when Thou gavest the law, for if they had, they should die.* Oza came and touched the Ark of the Testament, and died presently.† Nadab and Abiu came, and were punished with sudden death.‡ And King Ozias came as he ought not, and was smitten with a leprosy.§ Therefore saith David, speaking of Thee in the Psalm, that Thou wert "a God of revenge."‖

But after Thou hadst united Thyself to our human nature, and submitted Thee to the yoke of mortality, and wert become Man, the Gospel saith that publicans and sinners resorted unto Thee,¶ and that

* Exodus xix. 24. † 2 Kings vi. 7. ‡ Lev. x. 2.
§ 2 Par. xxvi. 19. ‖ Psalm xciii. 1. ¶ St. Luke xv. 1.

Thou didst courteously receive them, and most mercifully forgavest them their sins, and lovingly comfortedst them.

Fly not then, my soul, from thy Spouse, Jesus Christ, for although thou be filthy and defiled with sins, thy Lord is come down from Heaven upon earth in the similitude of sin for to wash away thy uncleanness, and to pardon thy offences. Whoever did so much for any wife as Christ hath done for human nature? If a mighty King, enamoured of some black-a-moor, a slave, should love her so dearly that he should not only ransom her, but also marry with her, were not this exceeding great love?

O Spouse of my soul, Prince of Glory, and King of Heaven, Who hast done all this for me, seeing that Thou hast not only ransomed me, but also, making Thyself Man, hast espoused Thee in the virginal bridechamber with human nature in indissoluble matrimony, and hast so exalted and made it so equal unto Thee, that all that is said of Thee in that Thou art God, as that Thou art the Creator impassible and omnipotent, is said of God made Man, and all that is said of Thee as Man is said of God, that He died, suffered, and was buried, by participating titles and names. And Thy unspeakable love stayeth not here, for Thou wouldst needs die for my sins and offences. Aaron and Mary murmured at their brother Moses because he had married an Ethiopian,* but Thou not only, O Lord, at Thy most holy Incarnation gavest Thyself unto us made Man, but wouldst also lose Thy life for us on the Cross for to give us life.

* Num. xii. 1.

TWENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

OF THE BENEFIT OF OUR REDEMPTION.

THE benefit of the Incarnation, my God and my Lord, doth very much draw me on to Thy love; but my redemption, if I deeply consider it, doth greatly enforce my will to love so noble a Benefactor. The stones did rend asunder at Thy death,* and if thou, my heart, be so hard that thou wilt not herewithal be vanquished and mollified to love the Lord thy God and Redeemer, it is much to be doubted that thou art reserved for the hammers of hell. In all other benefits and favours that Thou hast done us, Thou hast not laid out, O Lord, any whit of Thy substance, they have cost Thee no labour; Thou hast done no more but command it, for the royal Prophet saith, "Thou spakest the word and it was made, Thou commandedst and it was created."† It cost Thee nothing to create me, but to redeem me it cost Thee very dear, for it cost Thee Thy life and Thy honour, and Thou gavest Thy precious Blood in price of my redemption.

If, then, for other benefits I owe Thee so much that I am never able to pay Thee in giving myself wholly unto Thee, wherewithal, my most merciful Redeemer, shall I pay Thee for redeeming me, which was a great deal more than the creating me? How much do I owe Thee for my redemption? Thou mightest without dying for me, by many other ways, have redeemed me, but this was the sovereign means

* St. Matt. xxvii. 51. † Psalm xxxii. 9.

that Thou didst choose to show Thy great love that Thou bearest me. What greater sign or token of love than to give one's life for a friend? Thou sayest, that "no man hath greater love than he hath who yieldeth his life for his friends;"* yet was Thy love greater, and exceeded all love possible, in that Thou gavest Thy life for Thine enemies. Whereupon the holy Apostle saith, "God commendeth His charity in us, because when as yet we were sinners Christ died for us, and we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son."† And although by other means Thou wert able to redeem me, yet couldst Thou not by any other means so effectually bind me unto Thee, nor give so manifest signs of love, as by giving me Thy life.

Tell me then now, my soul, what could God do more for thee than die for thee? If a vile slave, being taken prisoner, should be laden with irons in a filthy dungeon, and for his heinous offences be condemned and judged by commandment of the King to some cruel death, and that the Prince, the son and heir of the King and his kingdom, passing by the street, should take off the chains from the slave and put them on himself and die for him, and satisfy for his offences, were not this servant for ever bound to love such a Prince as much as he were able?

O heavenly King, and Prince of Glory, I being captive of my sins, and fettered in the chains of my wickedness, condemned to everlasting death for my demerits, Thou, O Lord, as saith the Prophet Isaias,‡ hath taken upon Thee mine infirmities, and being

* St. John xv. 13. † Rom. v. 8—10. ‡ Isaias liii. 4.

made obedient even unto the death of the Cross, hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.* And how then shall I not love such a Prince, such a King, O Lord? As the nurse taketh a medicine to cure the child that she nurseth, so Thou, O Lord, Who art, as Osee saith, the Nurse of Ephraim,† hast taken upon Thee griefs and pains that I have deserved, to cure my infirmities, according to that which Thou sayest by the mouth of the Psalmist, "He paid that which He took not."‡ Great, O Lord, was the fire of love that inflamed Thee, seeing that with the heat of Thy unspeakable charity, Thou so burnest in love that Thou couldst not abide Thy garments; therefore, stripping them off Thee, Thou thoughtest good to hang naked for me upon the Cross, like another Noe, immeasurably drunken with the wine of love which Thou bearest to Thy Church.

Who is he then, so hard-hearted and obstinate, that yieldeth not to love Thee, seeing Thou hast loved us so much that Thou hast washed away our sins with Thine own Blood? Who will not love Thee with diligent zeal and delight when he shall remember that Thou stretchedst forth Thine arms on the Cross, desiring to embrace and receive therein all that fly unto Thee? The chalice that Thou drankest, O Lord, and the work of our redemption above all other things, maketh Thee amiable unto me. This carried away with it our whole love, this is that which doth most mildly work our redemption, and doth most justly require it, and doth most strongly hold it, and with greatest force doth draw it.

* Psalm cxiv. 8. † Osee xi. 3. ‡ Psalm lxviii. 5.

Thou hadst at Thy words gainsayers, at Thy works detractors, jesters at Thy torments, and scoffers at Thy death. Therefore, although I yield myself wholly unto Thee, my God, and love Thee all that I am able, all is nothing in comparison of the least thing that Thou didst for my redemption. What am I able to render Thee, my God and Lord, and what am I able to give Thee, most merciful Father, for all that Thou hast done me, and for all that Thou hast given me? Thou hast given me all things, and besides this hast dealt so bountifully with me, that Thou hast given me Thyself, according to the saying of the Apostle, "He hath given Himself for me."*

Thou hast loved me, my God, in a sort more than Thyself, seeing Thou hast died for me, and hast ransomed me at so dear a price, and hath delivered me from the torments whereto I was bound. Thou hast delivered me from miserable servitude, for I was slave to the devil, a cruel tyrant, who would have caused me to undergo extreme hard services, hadst not Thou, O Lord, delivered and succoured me, overthrowing him and weakening his great power that he had usurped over the world; but Thou "in the blood of Thy testament deliveredst the captives out of his infernal lake."† Let me be greatly ashamed, therefore, and confounded if I answer not Thy great love with my love, seeing for so great a benefit as this is I am debtor both of that and a great deal more. Thou art He, O Lord, that saith, that "when Thou art exalted on the Cross Thou wilt draw all things unto Thee."‡ Thou knowest the condition of men, and that

* Gal. ii. 20. † Zach. ix. 11. ‡ St. John xii. 32.

with benefits they are drawn and carried after their benefactor, and so Thou sayest that by the benefit of their redemption, and by losing Thy life for them Thou wilt win their wills.

Now am I no more able to resist my Redeemer; these so great obligations my heart is not able to endure, so great strokes of Thy mighty love, and therefore I desire nothing else in this life but to be perfectly crucified with Thee. Wherefore, O Lord, give me death, or imprint in my soul Thy death. I more desire here to be crucified with Thee than to enjoy Thy delights with Thee. I rather choose to be on the Cross with the good thief confessing Thy holy name,* than to go up to the Mount with St. Peter and to see Thee transfigured.† "It is not meet that I glory in anything but in Thy Cross, whereby the world is crucified unto me and I to the world."‡ If the death of Thy holy martyrs be precious in Thy sight,§ because they die for Thee, how much more glorious ought Thy death to be in my sight, seeing that Thou diedst for me. It is not much to spend one's life for One that gave him life, but it is a great matter that Thou, O God, gavest life unto them that are cause of Thy death.

Leave thou not therefore, O my soul, thy Spouse, Jesus Christ, alone amongst the thieves, for thou oughtest rather to go die with Him, as said St. Thomas to the rest of the Apostles, and request thy God and Lord that it may please Him to vouchsafe to moisten thee with His Blood, that thou mayest

* St. Luke xxiii. 40. † St. Matt. xvii. 2. ‡ Gal. vi. 14.
§ Psalm cxv. 14.

enter like a dove without gall of sin into the holes of the rock and hollowness of the mount.* It is meet that thou pay God this debt of love, preserving it to the end of thy life, for that as thy Redeemer loved thee to the end of His life, so oughtest thou to love Him likewise even unto death. Live not for thyself, but for Him that died for thee. If thou fail of this love, thou shalt as a rotten member be cut off from Christ thy Head, and reckoned in the number of those that do hate Him. "The charity of God urgeth us," saith the Apostle.†

TWENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

OF THE LOVE OF OUR REDEMPTION.

THOU hast here, O my soul, a large field to walk in, in consideration of the infinite goodness wherewith Almighty God hath redeemed thee. Behold now therefore the great worthiness of Him that suffereth, Who is the Son of God, the Infinite Wisdom, and as the Apostle saith, the Word of the Father, "the brightness of His glory, and the figure of His substance, Who purgeth our souls."‡ He calleth Him brightness of His Father for that He is the immeasurable clearness of His Father, and being as He was, He yielded Himself to death and reproach to purge our sins. He is of so great power, that as David saith in the Psalm, "With His only looks He maketh the earth to tremble."§

* Cant. ii. 14. † 2 Cor. v. 14. ‡ Heb. i. 3. § Psalm ciii. 32.

He would not in His passion dissemble His majesty and power, for both at the beginning and end thereof He showed His mightiness. When they went about to apprehend Him with soldiers, He declared His dignity, seeing that without laying hands on them, with one word only, "He threw all His enemies flat on the ground."* At His death, all creatures acknowledged Him for Lord: the heaven by denying His light, the earth with great quakings, the stones with rending asunder,† and as it were in token of feeling great grief. And yet this is He, O my soul, Who suffereth for thee; and if thou consider what it is that He suffereth, it is the most cruel Passion and most terrible pain that ever any man suffered in this world since God created it; for the more noble that the powers are, the more they penetrate the objects, so that where a power is very tender, it is very sensible. Any wound or stroke is more felt upon the head, for that it is the principal and most sensible member, than if it were received upon any other part of the body; and the country shepherd feeleth not cold nor a stroke so much as a delicate, tender gentleman. Seeing, then, that Christ our Saviour was of the most delicate complexion that ever was, for that His most sacred Body was miraculously formed in the Blessed Virgin's womb, by working of the Holy Ghost, and works done by miracle excel those that are wrought by Nature, every little wound caused greater pain and grief in the humanity of Christ than very great wounds could have afflicted any other person.

The stones gave not so great torment to Stephen,

* St. John xviii. 6. † St. Matt. xxvii. 51.

nor the gridiron to St. Laurence, as the scourges and crown of thorns tormented the Redeemer of the world. And how much more, then, the deep and cruel wounds that He suffered throughout all His Body—His Hands and Feet being bored through with hard and mighty nails, His sacred Temples pricked with sharp thorns, His beautiful Face defiled with filthy spittle, His clear Eyes covered with a vile rag, His Ears afflicted with hearing horrible injuries and abominable blasphemies, His Mouth tormented with gall and vinegar, His Cheeks wounded with buffets, His Beard and His Hairs furiously rent off with the skin, His Neck and Throat galled with rough cords and heavy chains, His Hands and Feet nailed to the Cross, His Veins and Sinews stretched asunder, His Flesh with cruel lashes gashed, His Side opened, and every Member of His Body destroyed? And what thinkest thou He suffered in Soul? With what grief and pensiveness was His most holy Soul tormented, seeing the imagination only of this Passion to come did so much afflict Him that it drove Him into such an Agony in the Garden that He did sweat drops of blood.*

This bloody Sweat was an argument of the most bitter and dolorous Passion of Jesus Christ, and a clear testimony of the great heaviness of His Soul. What mortal man was there ever so heavy, so afflicted and troubled in mind that he sweat blood, and in such abundance that it moistened the earth? He saw the ingratitude of men; He knew how few would reap commodity by His Passion; and this did more

* St. Luke xxii. 44.

afflict His compassionate Heart than the nails and cruel scourges.

Christ had a particular knowledge of all the sins of the world, past, present, and to come, and a particular heaviness for every one of them, which He abhorred so much as He esteemed the glory of God and loved Him; and as the love that He bore Him was infinite, so was His hatred and abhorring of sins infinite, whereupon ensued His great heaviness even unto death.*

And because it were never to make an end to treat of all the pains and torments that thy God and thy Lord hath suffered for thee, lift up now thy thoughts, my soul, meditate with thyself in the dead time of the night, and consider profoundly that all that thy Spouse, Jesus Christ, hath suffered is only for the great love that He beareth thee. So forcible was that fire of burning love which inflamed that royal Heart of Jesus Christ, that He called St. Peter Satan for speaking against His Passion, and when he took arms to hinder it, He commanded him to put up his sword into the scabbard.† And sitting at table at His Last Supper, as He that had obtained the thing which He so much desired, He said unto His Disciples, "I have greatly desired to eat this Paschal Lamb with you."‡ He having many other means whereby to redeem us, made choice of this most difficult and painful way to show the great love that He bore us.

Thou sendest not, O Lord our God, any Angel to redeem us; for the greatness of the love that Thou bearest us would not suffer that any other hands but

* St. Matt. xxvi. 38. † St. Matt. xxvi. 52.[1] ‡ St. Luke xxii. 15.

Thine own should be employed in so weighty a work as was the redemption of man, so dearly beloved of Thee. The first word that Thou spakest on the Cross was to entreat Thy Eternal Father for them that had nailed Thee on it.* Every man complaineth first of that which most grieveth him. And hereupon, because our offences did more grieve Thee than Thy own stripes, and Thou feeledst more our iniquities than Thine own pains, for the infinite love that Thou bearest us; therefore Thou didst first complain of our sins and require remedy for them at the merciful hands of Thy Father.

O fire of infinite perfection, which the waters of so many persecutions, blasphemies, and reproaches as Thou sufferedst in Thy Passion were not able to quench, but seemed rather like fragrea, which burneth the more vehemently with water, so when all Thy labours were assembled on the Cross, as it were in one, then shined most of all Thy humility, patience, and liberality, which are sparkles of Thy divine Love.

Therefore as the Mount Etna needeth no wood to be put upon it, for it feedeth itself, and the fire of the holy love in Thy most sacred Passion flameth up, for it had at hand torments and afflictions, which are the wood wherewith that holy fire burneth. O greatness of Love and exceeding Love, that for a vile worm of the earth Thou gavest Thy only-begotten Son!

Look, how many wounds thou seest, O my soul, in the Body of Christ, so many flames of fire thou oughtest to imagine there proceed out of the furnace of that Divine Breast which burneth with greater Love

* St. Luke xxiii. 34.

than the love of a mother. All this grew of the great compassion that He had of our souls. Consider and weigh well the dolorous Passion that He suffered for us. When Jonas beheld the storm that the sailors endured for his cause, he took pity on them and said, "This tempest riseth because of me; cast me therefore into the sea."* For the love that Christ beareth thee, He suffereth this cruel storm of tribulation and sorrows. Cast thyself, therefore, into this tempestuous sea of travails and afflictions, by suffering many pains and adversities for His sake Who hath endured so much for thee, and by loving Him Who hath so earnestly loved thee, that He hath put Himself on the Cross for love of thee.

TWENTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

OF THE LOVE FOR WHICH CHRIST OFFERED HIMSELF FOR OUR REDEMPTION.

IT was Thy blessed will and pleasure, O Lord, that Thy Heart should be opened with a spear, that my consideration might have the more easy entrance thereinto. As a house whereof the doors standing open inviteth one to see the beautiful things therein contained, so saith the Apostle St. John, that the temple was opened and the Ark of the Testament was seen. Opening Thy sacred temple,† beholding the thoughts of Thy Heart, I will cry aloud with the Psalmist, "In

* Jonas i. 12. † St. John xix. 34.

Thy thoughts, which Thou hast taken for my profit and commodity, there is none that is like unto Thee."*

All these things that Thou sufferedst outwardly did proceed of that loving thought of Thy Heart, and therefore St. John declareth Thy whole Passion in love when he saith, that "Thou hast loved us and washed away our sins with Thy blood."† Who is there, that without any commodity to himself, would do so much for another? There falleth not within the compass of man's understanding so strong and dreadful a case of love as that the Divine Majesty hath given His life for a life of so small importance as ours is. Who can remember himself of such a love, but that his eyes will gush out and overflow with tears, seeing that a life of so great price was given for a thing of so small value? We ought to think our years and days overshort to be sufficiently thankful for such a benefit; but if I marvel at this, much more ought I to marvel, O my God and all my weal, at the love that burned within Thy breast, which love if the Seraphs, being so called because they are inflamed in love, had seen upon Mount Calvary, they should have perceived that all their love jointly compared with this was but lukewarmness, and deserved not the name of love, for the Holy Ghost infused a love into the most sacred Soul of Christ at the instant of His conception, proportionable to the highness whereto it was exalted; and as this exaltation was the highest that God could give it, that is, to unite it personally with Himself, so, likewise, is His love without comparison the greatest of all the Saints or Angels, and

* Psalm xxxix. 6. † Apoc. i. 5.

thereof are spoken these words of the Canticles, "The King put me in His wine cellar, and disposed in me charity."* And as another text saith, He hath put upon Him abundance of love; He hath placed His banner of love upon it in token that it was overcome and vanquished with love; for he winneth the ensign in the battle of the love of God that is most overcome and possessed with love.

Who can marvel that such a love bursteth out and burneth the garments of His body, seeing the Holy Ghost saith that no man can carry fire in his bosom and not burn his clothes?† This love was that, O Lord, which bound Thy hands with cords, and carried Thee from one judge to another, suffering buffets, scourges, and prickling thorns; this it was that laid Thy Cross on Thy shoulders and made Thee stretch out Thine arms upon it in token that Thy love was extended unto all men, past, present, and to come. For Thou didst not only carry them upon Thy shoulders, as the High Priest carried the names of the twelve tribes of Israel,‡ but written in the inmost part of Thy Heart; and Thou lovest them so much that, Adam having sold Thee for an apple, and they themselves for very mere trifles, Thou camest to ransom them at so costly a price. O Jesus Christ, our most Blessed Saviour and Redeemer, to behold Thee buffeted on the face, and Thy most delicate and tender Body black and blue and gashed with so many thousand lashes, Thy most holy Head pierced with thorns, and Thy Hands and Feet bored with sharp nails, were enough to burst one's heart. No

* Cant. ii. 3. † Prov. vi. 27. ‡ Exod. xxviii. 12.

sense of man is able to conceive the doleful griefs that did inwardly torment Thee, but only Thou, O Lord, that didst feel them. Of Thee, saith the Prophet Isaias, "that every man went astray his own way, and that Thou layest our sins upon Thy shoulders;"* which burden Thou vouchsafedst to bear with so great pain and grief that Thou only art able to reckon the number of all those sins that caused Thee so many torments, and to know the greatness of such wonderful pains.

David confesseth that he had more sins than he had hairs on his head, and yet desireth pardon for those that he knoweth not,† and what shall the sins of all men be, then, who have had and have more sins than David had. O Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, unto what exceeding pains didst Thou put Thyself? Of Thee, O Lord, it is written, "Many heifers have surrounded me, and mighty great bulls have compassed me round about; they have opened their mouth against me like a roaring lion that seeketh after his prey."‡ And this was not spoken so much for the number of people that came to apprehend Thee, as for the sins of men that compassed Thy Heart.

What a pitiful table wert Thou to behold, O Lord, being environed with so many and so vile enormous sins as had been committed in all ages. Thou wert all on gore, blood, O Lord, like water, with torments outwardly, but Thy heart melted inwardly like wax with the fire of love that burned in Thy breast. Who is able to express the greatness of Thy torments, seeing

* Isaias liii. 6. † Psalm xxxix. 13. ‡ Psalm xxi. 13, 14.

the number of the sins were so great that caused them, and Thou didst not only suffer the pains due for sins committed, but to preserve us from falling into others again did cost Thee much grief and sorrow, seeing that the grace and favour of God that preserveth us from sinning was given us by the cost and charge of Thy Blood. Neither was it our sins only that cost Thee so great pains, but Thou didst also buy us all spiritual goods with the most dear and costly price of Thy precious Blood, which exceeded and surmounted far the value of the thing that Thou boughtest, the more hereby to show Thy exceeding great love.

Isaias called Thee "Father of the world to come,"* for that as all men according to the generation of flesh descend of Adam, so is there more touching grace that cometh out of Thee. Thou, O Lord, with the doleful cries of Thy pains, like the roaring of the lioness, givest life to the children that the first father killed. He, drinking the poison that the serpent presented him, begot impoisoned children;† and Thou destroyedst Thyself and didst lose Thy fresh hue to entertain and cherish Thy children, even like the hen whereto Thou comparest Thyself. And what shall I say of the fervent love wherewith Thou didst suffer death for me, as Thy Cross and death were the things whereby Thou wert especially to show the great love that Thou borest us. Thou, seeing that Thy death was prolonged, wert sore vexed and grieved in mind to see Thy Passion so far off, because Thou couldst not die sooner, according to the commandment and ordinance of Thy Father, and therefore at Thy Last

* Isaias ix. 6. † Gen. iii. 16.

Supper, knowing by Thy divine wisdom the resolute will and purpose of the traitor Judas, Thou didst bid him make haste and despatch, for Thou lovedst us so fervently,* and had such an earnest desire to see Thyself on the Cross to save souls, that the diligence of Judas seemeth slothful unto Thee.

O good Saviour, and our sweet Love, Thou desiredst not the sin of the traitor, nor yet commandedst it, but Thou desiredst to die for us, and Thou willedst him that went about Thy death very diligently to do that which he would do quickly. With so exceeding fervent charity Thou lovedst us that Thou desiredst the time to pass away swiftly, and that Judas might make more haste to bring those away that were to apprehend Thee, and so with great desire Thou wert many hours before they came, to expect and tarry them in the Garden for that they stayed long; and for want of some tormentors to shed with wounds Thy most blessed Blood, Thou pouredst it out in abundance struggling with death.

* St. John xiii. 27.

THIRTIETH MEDITATION.

OF THE LOVE OF GOD IN GIVING US HIMSELF FOR FOOD.

AMONGST many other great tokens of love that Thou hast given me, most merciful and most loving Lord, one of the highest and sovereign favours, and most notable sign of the love that Thou bearest and always hast borne me, was to give Thyself, the Bread of Life, in the venerable Sacrament of the Eucharist. Thy Evangelist, St. John, saith, that whereas Thou hast loved Thine in the world, unto the end Thou lovedst them.* Thou hadst always loved them greatly; but at the end, departing from them, by manifest works Thou showedst Thy immeasurable love that Thou didst bear them, by instituting this most holy Sacrament. And therefore St. John, minding to treat of this Supper, speaketh of the love that Thou bearest unto them, for that this Supper was altogether full of infinite love, through which Thou didst leave unto the world Thy corporal Presence in perpetual memory of Thy sacred Passion.

And if Thou hadst loved us and given us many gifts before such time as Thou gavest us Thy blessed Body for food of life, all was but little in comparison of the benefit that Thou bestowedst on us in giving us Thyself. Thou never showedst Thyself bountiful in all that ever Thou createdst until the institution of this Sacrament. A work so bountiful must not only be great, but must also countervail the power of the

* St. John xiii. 1.

Giver, and hereupon it cometh that a work may be bountiful in respect of some lord, which, if a King should do it, were not bountiful at all, because it debaseth his royal dignity.

Thou createdst, O Lord, the sun and moon and stars,* the sea and men and angels, yet in all this Thou showedst Thyself not bountiful, for that although these works be great in themselves, yet considering Thy omnipotency, we shall find they are very small in respect of that Thou art able to do. They cost Thee no labour, for as the Psalmist saith, "Thou spakest the word, and they were made; Thou commandedst, and they were created."† If a King should not be accounted liberal for giving sixpence, how shalt Thou be bountiful for creating Heaven and earth, seeing that it is more for a King to give sixpence than for Thee to create the whole world? A King may give so many testers that he may leave himself poor, but Thou, O Lord, although Thou create millions and millions of worlds, shalt still remain as rich and of as great power as Thou wert before. "The hand of our Lord," saith Isaias, "is not abridged,"‡ and His omnipotence decayeth not; but in this most holy Sacrament of the Altar Thou hast showed Thy omnipotency and magnificence, seeing that which Thou givest is of infinite value, and Thou hast given unto man all that Thou art able to give, and hast done for him as much as Thou art able to do.

This was a very bountiful work indeed, wherein Thou hast set up the whole rest of Thy omnipotence

* Gen. i. 16. † Psalm cxlviii. 5. ‡ Isaias lix. 1.

and majesty, Thou hast showed here the riches of Thy divinity and omnipotence, like as King Assuerus showed his glory and power at the banquet that he made to the Princes of the Persians and Medes. What more couldst Thou give me, or what more couldst Thou do for me to draw me to Thy love? What greater tokens, and what greater signs of love? What more evident testimonies couldst Thou give of the immeasurable love that Thou didst bear me? When the Prophet Nathan reprehended King David by the parable that he cited him of the rich man that had many sheep, and of a poor man that had but one, setting out the love that the same poor man did bear to his only sheep, he told him, that "she eat of the bread of his master and drank of his cup."* It had been a great and clear testimony how much Thou lovedst us, if Thou hadst made us partakers of Thy table, and hadst given us to eat of Thy bread and to drink of Thy cup, and with this alone might we have had sufficient trial of Thy great love; but it is a strange case of love that Thou hast vouchsafed to give us to eat, not only of Thine own meat, but wouldst also become Thyself our meat and food. Aman was not a little proud to see himself invited to Assuerus' table, and so did he vaunt and boast to his wife Zares, and other his friends, and said, in extolling himself, that Queen Esther had invited none but him, and that the next day he should dine with the King.† O King of Glory, and had it not been a sufficient argument of the great love that Thou barest us to have invited us only to Thy table; with this alone

* 2 Kings xii. 3. † Esther v. 12.

Thou mightst have showed the great love that Thou dost bear us, but Thy wonderful and dreadful love towards us sinners contented not itself with this alone, but passing on still forward, proceeded as far it could go, and mounted as high as it could reach, seeing Thou Thyself wouldst be our food, and that we, being set with Thee at one table and at one altar, might receive Thee in ourselves, and that, jointly with Thy holy Body, there might be communicated unto us those innumerable gifts and graces that our souls receive by means of this most holy Sacrament.

The holy Scripture saith of the great love that Jonathan bore unto David, "Jonathan loved David as his life, for he put off his own coat that he had on and gave it unto David, and all his other garments, even to his sword, and bow, and arming girdle."* Now, if the Scripture says this to show the great love that Jonathan bore unto David, albeit it was very great, yet it deserved not to be accounted so much as a shadow of this so immeasurable love that Thou hast borne us. What shepherd hath so loved his sheep that he hath given them his own flesh for food? What shepherd hath so loved his flock that he hath drawn out his own blood for to anoint them, and to cure them; and yet this hath the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, done with incredible love, Who saith, "I am the Good Shepherd, and a good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep."† O precious Pearl, and most singular Margarite, for which he that hath found Thee selleth all that he hath to buy it;

* 1 Kings xviii. 4. † St. John x. 14, 15.

Who, to show the great love that Thou bearest us, wouldst dissolve Thyself in the sharp vinegar of Thy most bitter Passion, and so give Thyself for food unto us. In credible histories we have read, and do know for certain, and it appeareth also by Holy Scripture, that many mothers, through extreme hunger, have killed their own children, and have eaten them to maintain their own lives.* This have we read mothers to have done with their own children. But what mother ever cut off her own arms, or gave her own flesh to her own child? But He that is more than a mother, Whose love exceedeth all the love of mothers, and all love created, hath yielded Himself to death that we might live, and hath given us his own Body for food, and Blood for drink, veiled in a wonderful manner, under the forms of bread and wine, to be our souls eternal refection.

* 4 Kings vi. 29.

THIRTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

HOW GOD, IN THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR, HATH SATISFIED THIS LOVE THAT HE BORE US.

AT the Last Supper, when Thou wert to depart, O Lord, from Thy dear and well-beloved disciples, Thy Heart, through the infinite love that Thou bearest us, was sore beaten, and tossed with two contrary things; for on the one side love said unto Thee that Thou must depart, and on the other side it willed Thee to tarry still. Love wished Thee to depart, in that Thy departure by Death and Passion was our redemption and life, and therefore it was expedient that Thou shouldst depart, that by this means Thou mightest open us the gates of Heaven, and prepare us seats in Thy glory. All our whole bliss depended upon Thy departure, for that going unto the Father by Thy Cross, Thou restoredst us from banishment, and washed our souls with Thy Blood. This is that which Thou saidst unto Thy Apostles at Thy Last Supper, "It is expedient for you that I go."* If Thou hadst not first ascended into Heaven, we had never been able to have entered into it, and, therefore, Thy departure imported us no less than our lives, for that, the divine ordinance presupposed, without Thy death and departure we could never have been saved.

On the other side, the self-same great love that Thou didst bear us willed Thee to tarry still, for he that loveth is loth to depart from his beloved, with

* St. John xvi. 7.

whom he would always be present, and he feeleth the grief of his departure according to the greatness of love that he beareth. But Thou, O Lord, through Thy most high and infinite wisdom, didst accomplish both these contrary loves, and hast performed both the one and the other, for Thou hadst departed, and tarried still. Thou wentest to Thy Father by Thy Cross and Passion and ascendedst into Heaven, and Thou remainedst here on earth with Thy militant Church, really and verily in this most holy Sacrament, and this is that which Thou saidst unto Thy disciples at Thy departure, "I am with you unto the end of the world."*

O infinite wisdom of my God! Who could ever have devised such an invention? He departed, and tarried still, and stayed still and departed; He went unto the Father, and remained here in this Sacrament; and remaining here really and verily under the form of bread and wine, He went to prepare us a place in Heaven. "I go to the Father," saith He, "to prepare you a place." Thou wouldst not, most merciful Lord, leave the Church, Thy beloved spouse, comfortless, depriving her of Thy real Presence. When the husband is to make any long absence, he must needs depart from his wife. If she love him truly, she will be heavy and sad for the departure of her husband, neither will the jewels that she hath received at his hands be able to make her merry nor content her, because she esteems more the presence of her husband than the gifts; so, O Lord, after Thou hadst redeemed and endowed Thy Spouse the Church,

* St. Matt. xxviii. 20.

which was before in thraldom of sin, Thou gavest her many jewels of grace and Sacraments, with the which Thou didst adorn and enrich her; yet albeit Thou hadst left her the rich gifts of Baptism, Confirmation, Order, and other Sacraments, she would always have been sad and pensive having not Thy presence, and the Lady of the Gentiles would have become like a widow; but Thou remaining with her for ever in this wonderful Sacrament in Body and in Soul, God and perfect Man, so great and omnipotent as when Thou walkedst upon earth, and as Thou art now in Heaven, hast accomplished her desires, and hast showed the immeasurable love with which Thou lovest her, for this sovereign love could not suffer that Thou shouldst be one hour absent from Thy most loving Spouse, and therefore it hath pleased Thee to remain with us after an unspeakable manner in this most holy Sacrament, making it a summary of all Thy great and ancient wonders.

I marvel not that Thou couldst do it, but that Thou wouldst do it. I know Thy omnipotency, and therefore am not afraid, considering what Thou canst do, that being as Thou art, God of so great majesty, Thou couldst inclose Thyself under so base accidents, but I marvel much that Thou wouldst do it. O incomparable love and infinite charity of my God, that Thou hast vouchsafed to visit man, a sinner, and to come unto him with Thy whole Court of Angels and Archangels, Cherubim and Seraphim, and to impart unto our souls the riches of Thy grace and glory by such an exquisite and wonderful means as by coming Thyself, the King of Glory, disguised in a

consecrated Host. Who were able to approach nigh unto Thee, if Thou camest open and discovered in the same glory and majesty that Thou art in Heaven? How should our eyes be able to abide immeasurable clearness and brightness?

The children of Israel were not able to endure the brightness of the face of Moses,* having but talked with Thee upon the mountain, and therefore he was fain to put a veil before his face. Queen Esther fell in a swoon beholding the majesty of King Assuerus;† and when there appeared an Angel to the Prophet Daniel he was stricken for dead.‡ And how, then, should we be able to abide so great a glory, or to approach nigh unto Thy infinite majesty, if Thou, O Lord, of Thy great mercy, didst not humble Thyself and come veiled and covered under so base elements? Thou showedst the infinite love that Thou barest us in dying for us, and to the end that not only the wise, but the ignorant also, and little ones, might understand the love wherewith Thou lovedst us, Thou wouldst leave us this Sacrament in memory of the inestimable benefit of Thy most holy Passion. As Princes will have their valiant acts not only written of by chroniclers, but also their images set up, embossed in brass, to show to all posterity their worthy deeds, and that the people who cannot read may understand them likewise, so Thou, O Lord and our God, not thinking it enough to have the great work of Thy Passion and redemption written by the Prophets and Evangelists, hast placed in this Sacrament, as it were in an image and picture of the memory of that

* Exod. xxxiv. 30. † Esther xv. 18. ‡ Dan. x. 17.

famous victory which Thou obtainedst on the Cross over death and the devil. This Sacrament is a lively image and a perpetual memorial of Thy sacred Passion, as the Church singeth, saying, "O God, Who in this wonderful Sacrament hast left us the memory of Thy Passion." There is represented unto us in the consecrated Host Thy most holy Passion. Thou wilt be known of all, and impart Thyself unto all, and therefore, under these visible kinds of bread and wine, Thou givest Thyself unto the Faithful, as well idiots as those that are learned. Hereupon Thou saidst in the Book of Canticles, "I am a flower of the field."* Of the flowers of inclosed orchards and gardens none but particular men have the use and pleasure and those that are owners of such gardens; but of the flowers of the field every man taketh his pleasure, and they be common to all, as well little as great. Thou saidst very well, my God, that Thou art a flower of the field, seeing Thou communicatest with all, and givest Thyself unto any, giving Thyself in this Sacrament as well to the poor and little ones as to the rich and mighty. Thy charity is not abridged, but very largely extended, which embraceth and overshadoweth all men.

* Cant. ii. 1.

THIRTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

HOW GOD SHOWED US HIS LOVE AT THE TIME THAT HE INSTITUTED THIS SACRAMENT.

THE great love that possessed Thy Heart, most merciful Lord and our Redeemer, was so immeasurable, that the malice of the world was never able to quench this flaming fire; but it seemeth rather like the fire of brimstone, which as it flameth the more with water, so is Thy sovereign love with our grievous sins augmented. They would have cooled another heart, had it been never so inflamed, and hardened it, how tender and loving soever it had been; but Thou, my God, when we were worst of all, and most worthy of hell, then didst Thou bestow on us the greatest benefits. Who could not love such a merciful goodness, and who would not seek such a Lord as He is?

Behold, then, my soul, the exceeding great love of thy Spouse, Jesus Christ. The greatest sin that ever was committed in the world was the putting to death of our Lord and Saviour, yet when the world was in greatest heat to murder her Creator, even then was our sweet Redeemer ready to give His life for it. When Judas sold Him, and His enemies were in a most deadly rage and hatred against Him, then at the self-same hour He gave unto it the sweetest gift.*

The greatest gift, O Lord, that ever Thou gavest to

* St. Luke xxii.

the world was to give it Thyself for food, and the greatest benefit that ever Thou bestowedst on it was at that time when we were least worthy to receive it. This great love would the holy Apostle signify when he noticed the time in which Thou didst institute this Sacrament, saying, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, brake and said, Take ye and eat, this is my Body, which shall be delivered for you."* The Apostle setteth down the time when this Sacrament was instituted, which was the same night that they apprehended Thee, thereby to extol and set out the great love that Thou bearest us, and to the end we might understand that Thou didst not only give Thyself for food, but also that Thou showedst us this great favour when we least deserved it.

The world was never so worthy of hell, as when Thou gavest it the food of glory; it deserved eternal death, and Thou dealest for their life. When the people of Israel were committing idolatry and worshipping the calf, then wert Thou, O Lord, giving them the law whereby they might live, and teaching Moses what they should do to be saved and to obtain glory.† When St. Paul, likewise, did persecute Thy holy Church with greatest fury, and made himself most unworthy of Thy mercy, then, O Lord, didst Thou call and convert him, and showedst him Thy divine essence.‡ Thou, being angry with the incredulous King Achaz and his people, and the Prophet Isaias rebuking them, instead of punishing them,

* 1 Cor. xi. 23. † Acts vii. 41. ‡ Acts ix. 4.

Thou promisedst to give them Thy only-begotten Son made man.* When the rebellious people said they would forsake Thee, and follow their lovers, Thou, O Lord and my God, Thou saidst unto them by Osee, that Thou wouldst carry them into the desert, and talk with them in the secrets of their heart, showing them special grace and favour.†

Hereupon saith the spouse in the Canticle, "I sleep, but my heart waketh." I sleep, saith the negligent and slothful soul, careless of my weal, and forgetful of my salvation. With incredible love He awaketh me, and calleth me with benefits, that I sleep not carelessly in sin. "The voice of my Beloved which calleth me: Open to Me, My sister and My love." With these strokes and works of great mercy thou art awaked, my soul, to the love of thy God and Lord, seeing He thus giveth thee Himself for food, thou being unworthy to come nigh unto Him. When Thou gavest us Thyself, O Lord, in Thy Incarnation, Thou didst then, being God, become Man; but when Thou givest us Thyself in this Sacrament, man is made like unto God, for this food is not converted into him that eateth it, but contrariwise, he that receiveth it is converted into it: the soul is changed into Christ, when it is more and more like unto Christ in grace and virtue. Thou wouldst incorporate us, O Lord, with Thy Body, and give us Thy Blood, that being drunken with Thy love, we might become one soul, one will, and one heart with Thee.

What else is it to drink Thy Blood, which is the seat of the soul, but to knit my soul with Thy Soul

* Isaias vii. 14. † Osee ii. 14.

with an inseparable knot and band of love. Thou desiring to have me come unto Thee by love, hast vouchsafed to come unto me disguised in this most holy Sacrament. What a love were it of a Prince if, first debasing himself to marry with a vile slave, and after, seeing her cold or lukewarm in her love, he should go seek some ways and exquisite means to draw her to his love, and should give her some delicate prepared morsel to win her to love him. O infinite love of the King of Heaven, Who, our soul being slave and captive of sin, hast redeemed her and married Thyself with her, and yet, seeing we were cold in Thy love, hast sought exquisite means, and a mystical morsel, to inflame us in the fire of charity. "Great are the works of our Lord, and exquisite in all His will,"* as, being able to have redeemed us by many other means, Thou madest choice of this the most excellent of all, which was to become man and to die. So, likewise, to inflame us in Thy love, Thou soughtest out this most excellent way that could be imagined, by which our soul is kindled in love, and enriched with inestimable riches.

What Prince or King cometh into a poor man's house, and giveth not him his dinner? And how much better able art Thou to do it, O Sovereign Lord and King and Prince of Glory? Thou enteredst into the virginal womb of Thy most holy Mother, and madest it the temple of the Holy Ghost.† Thou enteredst into the house of Zachary, and sanctifiedst St. John, and his mother was full of the Holy Ghost.‡

* Psalm cx. 2. † St. Luke i. 38. ‡ St. Luke i. 44.

Thou enteredst at Thy birth into a stable, and didst leave it made a Paradise of Angels.* Thou enteredst into Egypt flying from Herod, and threwest down the idols of the same country.† Thou enteredst into the river of Jordan, and sanctifiedst the waters.‡ Thou wentedst into the wilderness to fast, and honouredst it with Thy presence, and hereupon became there so many Saints in it. Thou enteredst into the house of St. Peter, and curedst his mother-in-law of a burning fever.§ Thou enteredst into the house of Jairus, and raised to life his daughter.|| Thou enteredst into the house of Zacheus, and justifiedst him.¶ Thou enteredst into the house of Martha and Mary, and madest them Thy devout disciples.** Thou enteredst into the place where Thou madest Thy Last Supper, and there didst institute this most holy Sacrament.†† Thou enteredst into the Garden, and didst moisten it with Thy Blood. Thou enteredst into the sepulchre, and replenishedst it with Angels. Thou enteredst into Limbo, and didst rid it of the souls Thee expecting. Thou enteredst into Heaven, and filledst it with more glory.

And what thinkest Thou, my soul, then, that this Lord will do if He enter into Thy poor chamber, but of poor make it rich, of sick whole, and of faint-hearted and cowardly, stout and valiant? The torments which He touched, as the Cross, nails, thorns, and whips, He sanctified, insomuch that we reverence and

* St. Luke ii. 12. † Isaias xix. 1.
‡ St. Matt. iii. 16. § St. Luke iv. 39. || St. Matt. ix. 25.
¶ St. Luke xix. 9. ** St. Luke x. 38.
†† St. Luke xxii. 10.

worship them to this day; and then, if to His pains He yield so great honour, what will He do to His pleasures? If He enrich the Cross, what, then, will He do to the soul of the just? He giveth life unto our soul, medicine to our wounds, health to our infirmities, rest to our travails, and a house to our peregrination. With this food the soul is united to her Spouse, with this the understanding is lightened, the memory quickened, the will affected, the inward taste delighted, devotion increased, the heart mollified, the fountain of tears opened, the passions subdued, good desires revived, our weakness is strengthened, and taketh breath, with the Prophet Elias, to go up even unto the mount of God.* What tongue is able to express the excellencies of this Sacrament? With the good that it worketh in the soul, it is "a memorial of the marvels of God."†

* 3 Kings xix. 8. † Psalm cx. 4.

THIRTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

OF THE LOVE AND PREPARATION WHEREWITH WE OUGHT TO RECEIVE THIS SACRAMENT.

WHEN Thou appearedst on a time, O Lord, to Thy servant Moses, in the mountain, the Scripture saith, that Thou wert in a bush that burned in flames of fire; and Thou commandedst Moses to put off his shoes to come unto Thee. How do I contemplate Thee in the Sacrament, and in what sort art Thou here, but made flames of fire of love, amidst the thorns of the accidents of bread? As the fire warmeth and giveth light, so is the soul here, that doth worthily receive Thee, inflamed in Thy divine love, and lightened in the knowledge of this mystery. Hereupon when the Jews murmured amongst themselves, and said, "How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat?" Thou answeredst them, O Lord, "Amen, Amen, I say unto you, unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you."* Whereto serveth this answer to the demand they made? They, as incredulous and doubting, did demand, How can this be? And Thou, O Lord, dost give them for answer, that unless they eat It, they shall not live. The answer is very fit to the purpose: for if Thou wilt know how, eat It, and thou shalt know, for this Sacrament lighteneth the understanding of the soul, and giveth light and clearness to know the sweetness of this food of Heaven; and so no man knoweth this but he that tasteth It,

* St. John vi. 54.

and no man tasteth It but he that worthily receiveth It. The sweetness and pleasantness of this food is hidden; and he knoweth it, and is a partaker of it, that receiveth It as he ought to do. Jonathan tasted a little honey and his eyes were lightened.* O most sweet honeycomb, which art not only sweet, but sweetness itself, in tasting of whose most delectable sweetness, the eyes of our soul are opened to know how Thou givest us Thyself in this Sacrament. Hereupon saith David in the Psalm, "Come unto God, and you shall be enlightened."† The Jews are murmuring among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat?" The heretic and infidel demand how can it be? Marry, if they will know how, they must know it by eating. Let them leave their infidelity, and forsake their sins; for in coming with purity of conscience to this fire of most excellent charity, their hearts shall be inflamed in the love of God, and they shall understand that which now they know not, and how they shall come to deal with their God: with reverence and fear putting off the shoes of their earthly affections and love of this world, for in this sort would God have Moses to come unto Him.

In like manner, when Thou gavest the law unto the people of Israel, Thou commandedst that no man should accompany with his wife, and that they should wash their garments, and should prepare themselves with all diligence and cleanness.‡ And how then shall I, my God and my whole weal, come unto Thee laden with uncleanness of sins? And how much more is it to receive the Lawgiver than the

* 1 Kings xiv. 27. † Psalm xxxiii. 6. ‡ Exodus xix. 14, 15.

law. The children of Israel did not eat of manna from Heaven until their meat was quite spent that they had brought out of Egypt; no more shalt thou, my soul, enjoy this celestial Bread until the love of the darkness of the world be consumed in thee. And as the manna, which was a plain and clear figure of this Sacrament, being set in the heat of the sun, waxed soft and melted, and with the heat of the fire grew hard; so this Sacrament with charity mollifieth and filleth the soul, which with charity receiveth it, and killeth him that eateth and receiveth it with the fire of sensual concupiscence, and hardeneth in the stomach of those that come unto it with the heat of the covetousness of worldly things. Hereupon saith the Apostle, "Let every man prove himself, that he eat it not unworthily."* He that eateth any meat let him taste it first, and if it like him not, let him cast it away; but here it is clean contrary, for I am not to prove the meat but to prove myself, for that, although Thou Thyself, O Lord, be this meat both good and wholesome, yet may I receive it after such a manner that I may die at this banquet, as did Amnon† and Simon Machabeus,‡ not through fault of the meat, but by mine own evil disposition. "When thou sittest at meat with a Prince," saith the Wise Man, "have diligent regard what is set before thee, and put a knife at thy throat if thou have thy soul in thy power."§ Behold diligently that the thing that is set before thee on this table is God Himself. If Thou requiredst, O Lord, in the Old Law so many purifi-

* 1 Cor. xi. 28. † 2 Kings xiii. 28. ‡ 1 Mach. xvi. 16.
§ Prov. xxiii. 1.

cations for to eat the bread of proposition,* and before that the precise Achimelech would give David and his company to eat thereof, he demanded them if they were clean, and this bread did the Priests themselves make, and they were laid upon a table of pure gold; how much more ought I to do for to receive Thee, my God, the true and lively Bread? If Solomon built so sumptuous a temple to put the Ark of our Lord in wherein the manna was kept,† and offered a thousand sacrifices when he placed it in the Temple, and the King Assuerus was seven days preparing a banquet for his Princes of the Persians and Medes,‡ how much ought I then to do to come unto Thy table? If Joseph of Arimathea wrapped Thy holy Body, being dead, in a sheet, and laid it in a new tomb, where never any had been buried before, how shall I receive Thy holy Body quick and alive, with a conscience that is not white and clear from sin? And where there is no dead thing to be found, see then, saith Solomon, that thou do diligently regard, O my soul, whom thou receivest on the altar, and what meat this is that is set before thee, and that thou receive Him is such wise that it may not be said unto thee, "How camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment."§

Consider well this meat, and that it is food of the living and not of the dead, and therefore our Saviour first raised Jairus his daughter to life, and afterwards gave her to eat.‖ Sigh before thou eat, for so did Job to eat the material bread;¶ and the King Josias made not his great banquet and feast to the people

* 1 Kings xxi. 4. † Heb. ix. 4. ‡ Esther i. 3.
§ St. Matt. xxii. 12. ‖ St. Luke viii. 55. ¶ Job iii. 24.

before they had purged Jewry of idolatry.* With sighs and tears thou oughtest first to prepare thyself, and therefore our Saviour first washed His Disciples' feet before He communicated it unto them.† Lay away all covetousness, which is worship of idols,‡ and cast off the care of thy belly, which thou holdest for God; cleanse thyself of all the other idols of vices and sins. The Apostles, being sad and contrite, received this Sacrament, and because Judas received not in like manner, Satan entered forthwith into him. Our Lord first eat the lamb, and accomplished all that the law commanded, before He instituted this Sacrament and communicated to His Disciples, for the true preparation to receive it is to do all that God commandeth, and to keep and observe His holy law.

"Behold, therefore, diligently what is set before thee," saith the Wise Man, and weigh Who this Lord is that thou goest to receive. And he saith, moreover, that thou must put a knife at thy throat. Look how devout and contrite they are which come to be executed by justice in the market-place, when the hangman, blindfolding them, putteth the knife to their throat, for so oughtest thou for to come to this lively Host. Those that are in this manner at point of death deal not about seeking honours, worship, nor delights, nor in heaping up money; but rather they pardon their enemies, they despise the world, they have death and the judgment of God before their eyes, they only remember the life to come, forgetting the present.

Thou oughtest so to communicate as though, forthwith communicating, thou wentest to die, even as

* 2 Par. xxxiv., xxxv. † St. John xiii. 5. ‡ Colos. iii. 5.

though thou hadst already the knife at thy throat, and wert at the point to yield an account to God of thy whole life; and after the Communion not to defile thyself again with worldly conversation, that thou mayest not be like unto them which received our Lord with joy into Jerusalem with boughs of olive and palm,* and afterwards hanged Him cruelly. Our Lord, after He had communicated, preached most earnestly, and withdrew Himself into a garden, there to give Himself to prayer. Many that very devoutly communicate for the while do profit very little in the spiritual life, for that after the Communion they retire not themselves, but are distracted in the conversation of the world. It chanceth that the child of rich parents, and that feedeth upon dainty and substantial meats, is pale for all that, weak, and sickly, and the cause thereof is for that after he is risen from his father's table he eateth earth in a corner. If thou profit not, O my soul, in the service of God, by eating daily this divine food at the table of thy Heavenly Father, it is because thou eatest earth afterwards, and givest thyself to worldly practices and conversation. Hereupon cometh it that thou goest so weak and pale, and so decreasing in spiritual life. Enter within thyself in communicating, and lose not so good a conjunction to deal with God. Behold with a lively faith what thou hast within thee: the very same that was in the Virgin's womb, and that now sitteth at the right hand of the Father, and then say, with Elizabeth, "Whence is this to me that my Lord cometh unto me?"† What am I and what is He? In this meditation will I spend the days of my life.

* St. Matt. xxi. 9. † St. Luke i. 43.

THIRTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

OF THE BENEFIT OF CREATION.

RECOUNTING, O Lord, with Thee in holy meditations, in gathering up a sum of the innumerable benefits that I have received of Thy bountiful hands for the which I am bound greatly to love Thee; having treated somewhat of the greatest and most high benefits, which are, becoming Man for our sakes, Thy being Crucified on the Cross for our redemption, and Thy presence in the Sacred Host for our food and life: there presenteth itself unto me, O my Creator, my creation of nothing, and Thy making of me capable to enjoy the aforesaid benefits, without any precedent merit on my part.

All this proceedeth of love, and thanks be given therefore to Thy infinite goodness and mercy. The great love, O Lord, that eternally Thou didst bear to Thine own goodness was cause that Thou createdst me, for Thy love would not suffer Thee to be without creating of creatures. Touching my essence, Thou hast given me to be substantial in that I am a substance and not an accident; and touching my being of grace, Thou hast given me better accidents than to other creatures. Thou hast given me a being, and that not of a stone, or a tree, nor a bird, but of a man and reasonable creature, made after Thine own image and likeness, and hast disposed the body with a marvellous composition and harmony. And put the case that parents have been cause of the form of the body, yet have they been but a second cause, and

even this cause have they also received at Thy hands. In other living creatures, the sires and dams are cause both of body and soul, but in men of the body only, wherein it hath pleased Thee to use second causes, not upon any necessity, but to ennoble Thy creatures, Thou being the only Creator and Cause of our souls, no second cause intermeddling with it.

Wherefore nature itself inviteth me to love Thee, for if nature teach that the father ought to be beloved, how much more oughtest Thou, my Lord, Who hast made me of nothing? Every work could love the workman that made it, if it had a will to be able to love; and why then should not I love Thee, and as much as I am able, seeing my whole power and ability I have received of Thee? Greatly ought I, therefore, to love Thee by Whom I live, feel, love and have my being. I consider then, my Lord, what manner of thing Thou hast made me, touching the body a noble creature, and in soul to Thine own image and likeness, partaker of reason and capable of bliss. Thou hast joined these two things with an incomprehensible contrivance and unsearchable wisdom, and I have not deserved it in that I was not, for no man can merit before he hath being. Thou hast not done this for hope of reward, seeing Thou art my God, and hast not need of my goods.* Thou createdst me, not as Thou didst other creatures, but with great counsel and advice of the whole most Blessed Trinity, saying, "Let us make man to Our own image and likeness."† That man, even from his first creation, might understand how much he is bound to his Creator: and

* Psalm xv. 2. † Gen. i. 26.

might thereby so much the more fervently love Thee, the more marvellously that he perceived himself created and made to Thy image and likeness. As Thou art One, and yet art in all places giving life and moving and governing all things whereby we move, live, and be; so our soul is whole in our body and whole in every part thereof, quickening it, moving it, and governing it.

This dignity Thou hast granted unto man only, and hast given it unto me, and yet besides this Thou hast inclosed in me the natural affections of other creatures which Thou hast created for to serve me. Thou hast commanded Thy Angels to keep me, and hast given me understanding, memory, and will, making me after a sort like unto Thy most excellent substance, seeing that by these powers I am made like unto Thee. Thou hast given me understanding that I might know Thee, and know myself and enjoy myself; for the creature that wanteth understanding cannot take pleasure in himself whether he be served by other creatures or no. They can make no reflection in their works nor any order of the end wherefore they do them not, as man can do which knoweth himself and his works, and the ends whereunto they are directed, for in that man by his will and understanding is lord of his works, by the same power he hath sovereignty over all other creatures. And how, then, O Lord, shall I not love Thee for these powers that Thou hast given me? I yield Thee thanks for the benefits that other creatures have received at Thy hands for the love of me. Look how many creatures Thou hast created to serve me, so many obligations there are that bind me

to love Thee, and therefore when I love Thee not, I do not only injury to Thy Divine Majesty but to myself also and to all the whole world besides.

It is meet, therefore, surely, my Creator and Lord, that the effect be answerable to its cause. I am the effect, and the love that Thou, O Lord, hast borne me and bearest me hath been the cause that I was, for as Thou in seeing Thyself seest us, so also in loving Thyself Thou lovest us in Thee, and that love was the cause that Thou createdst us, and is now the cause that Thou conservest us, and therefore it is more meet that I answer Thee with love; for, seeing love was the cause that Thou broughtest me forth, let the same love be the cause that I may be reduced unto Thee, and by that love which I, that am the effect, shall bear Thee, I shall be made like to my Cause; and therefore it is meet, although it be painful to my sensuality to walk the path of virtue and of Thy service, and that with a cheerful mind, I pass such pains for to obtain Thy love. Hereupon saith Ecclesiasticus, "Love Him that made thee with all thy force." * Oh, how meet a thing it is, O Lord, that the work which Thou hast made should love Thee, and the frame that Thy Divine hands have framed. Of Thy will only Thou madest it, and because Thou wouldst Thou createdst it, and with whom then should I converse but with Thee? If a painter should paint some fair and beautiful picture in a table, and were able to give it sight and sense to perceive the properness and to know the maker, and should see him sit before it, with what love, with what inward

* Ecclus. vii. 32.

affection, and with what goodwill would it love him? What else would this image do, but with all its force, love, praise, bless, glorify, and honour the painter of whom it took to be so beautiful, so marvellous, and commended of all men? Would not haply this beautiful image be wholly inflamed in love of the painter? Would it not night and day give him many thanks, and as many as it were able, for having made it such a one and so beautiful?

And wherefore, then, wilt not thou, my soul, being not only the image and frame of so great a Workman and so wonderful a Painter as is thy God and Lord, and not only the work of His mighty hands, but the thing wherein He hath even painted Himself also, seeing thou art made to His image and likeness, to bend and move thee the more to love Him: wherefore, I say, wilt not thou bless and love Him for ever? Behold, then, how great a sin thou committest and how great punishment thou deservest; if thou despise so great grace and forget such an exceeding great benefit. Unto Him that made thee such a one thou owest all that thou art, all that thou hast, and thyself wholly; Him thou oughtest to love Who hath given thee the faculty for to love, and unto Him thou owest all thy desires and appetites Who hath given thee power to covet and desire. If thou suffer thy thoughts to wander upon other matters, and employest thy love upon any other thing, thou art a thief and a robber, and dost alienate those things that thou hast; and, therefore, at the Day of Judgment an account shall be taken not only of idle words,* but also of wandering

* St. Matt. xii. 36.

thoughts and vain desires; and that upon great reason, for unto Him that hath given thee thy being, is due of right, every act and operation of thy being that thou hast; and therefore, my Creator and my Lord, Thou requirest right and justice at my hands when Thou commandest that I love Thee with all my heart, and with all my soul, and with all my understanding, and with all my strength, seeing that I am wholly Thine and have received all this of Thee.

THIRTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

OF THE BENEFIT OF CONSERVATION.

I WILL sing unto Thee, O Lord, seeing Thou hast given me so many benefits, and I will praise Thy holy name. As the sun of itself produceth beams of light in the air, and conserveth them in the same being that it gave them, so dealest Thou with me, most merciful Lord, taking me from a not being unto a being, when Thou createdst me, and afterwards conserving me in that same being which Thou gavest me. I refer it to Thy grace and benignity that Thou hast made me free, not only in the general benefit of freewill which Thou hast given me as to all men, for to be able to govern me, but also in that Thou hast delivered me out of the servile subjection wherein I see many whom the cruel tyrant, our common enemy, keepeth tied up to mangers feeding upon straw, and like fodder.

And this it is wherein they take pleasure to enjoy the delights which are common to brute beasts; but Thou, O Lord, hast cut asunder the cords wherewith I was bound for a time, Thou hast taken off my fetters, and broken my bonds,* for which I will always yield unto Thee the sacrifice of praise. Thou hast set me free, that I might ascend up to the height of the mountains, and enjoy the freshness and sweet flowers of Thy spiritual consolations, and of the clear waters of Thy holy Scriptures. Others I see subject to the yoke, ploughing the earth and disbowelling themselves to get riches, and employing themselves wholly hereupon; ploughing, as the Prophet Osee saith, in riches and reaping sins, and in the end the fruit cometh to nothing.† But towards me, O Lord, Thy mercy hath been so bountiful, that my yoke hath been broken with abundance of oil, and my neck remaineth free for to be able to lift up mine eyes unto Heaven,‡ and that in beholding on one side and on the other the vanity of this present world, I might fly from it, and purchase the world to come.

Some draw in the cart, and with the weight and creaking of the wheels cannot attend to any other thing; as they which with other men's affairs and care of their family, can think of nothing else but it, drawing many times with ropes of vanity, which break when they have most need.§ But Thou, of Thy great merciful love, hast delivered me from this heavy weight, and hast given me, O Lord, nimbleness to go

* Psalm cxv. 16. † Osee x. 13. ‡ Isaias x. 27. § Isaias v. 18.

skipping from mountain to mountain, that there, being separated from the noise of the earth, I may sometimes feel the harmony of Heaven. And although I cannot understand the ditty, yet shall I perceive the sweet concord of voices, and, above all, I shall hear the whispering of the sweet air wherein Thy voice is enfolded, as was shown in the mount to the Prophet Elias.* I know well that I am always before Thy divine presence, and that Thou art above me defending me, and beneath me, holding me up; Thou compassest me without, and strengthenest me within, and Thy face is not formed in quantity, so that it should require any compass to contain it. Thy power hath given me to be that I am, Thy mercy hath restored me from perdition, Thy benignity have given me wherewith to merit, and Thy providence hath kept me from losing Thee when I had Thee. What workman loveth not that which he made with his own hands? Who hath not care of his own affairs? Surely he that hath not a care of his own, and especially of his domesticals, performeth not the fidelity that he oweth Thee, but is worse than an infidel.†

And seeing, then, Thou, O Lord, art the chiefest good, and we the work of Thy hands, it standeth not with reason that Thou preserve not that which Thou hast made, or takest no regard of that which Thou hast created. As of Thee I have received my being, so likewise have I received my preserving, for with Thy mighty hand Thou holdest me up, and with Thy bounty and clemency Thou dost cherish, inspire,

* 3 Kings xix. 12. † 1 Tim. v. 8.

lighten, call, and inwardly comfort me; Thou so busiest Thyself, my God and my Lord, about me, only visiting me with so many special consolations, that it seemeth as though, having forgotten the whole world besides, Thou takest care but of me only.

Stay Thyself, my God, stay Thyself, for I am not able to endure the number of mercies that flow upon me. Hold Thy hand, for my frail flesh is not able to bear the great multitude of supernal delights that Thou givest to my soul. This corrupt body presseth down the soul,* and this earthly inhabitance disturbeth the understanding from thinking on many things.

Oh, would to God that day were come wherein my soul, being set free from the bands of the flesh, I might enjoy with Thee Thy sight and sweet conversation without the annoyance and lumpishness that I feel through the heaviness of my body. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?† And, this mortal endued with immortality, when with my immortal soul I shall enjoy immortality in Heaven, my heart and my flesh shall rejoice in the living God.‡ But so long as I live in this exile, and until that happy day do come wherein my soul shall see Thee in Heaven, and enjoy Thy divine essence, what wilt thou, O Lord, that I do? Wilt Thou have me to love Thee? Teach me how to love Thee, for my heart is ready, my heart is ready, I will sing and praise Thee in my glory.§ I would I

* Wisdom ix. 15. † Rom. vii. 24. ‡ Psalm lxxxiii. 3. § Psalm cvii. 20.

were some great thing, to be able to give Thee some great matter; but such as I am, it is meet that I give it unto Thee, seeing Thou, being He that Thou art, hast so liberally given Thee unto me. I would I had, O Lord, a hundred lives, a hundred souls, a hundred wills, and as many hearts for to give Thee, all which, with a fervent and voluntary love, I would bestow on Thy Divine Majesty. But this little that thus I am, is Thine, and all that is in me so wholly given over unto Thee, that if it were lawful for me, I would kill myself with mine own hands, when I found anything in me that was not Thine. O dear Creator, Who with Thy mighty hand upholdest, maintainest, and governest all things that Thou hast created, fly not, O Lord, fly not from us, suffer Thyself to be beloved of Thy creatures, that Thy Name may be praised, sanctified, and blessed for ever upon earth, as it is worshipped and glorified of Thy Saints and Angels in Heaven.*

* St. Matt. vi. 9; St. Luke xi. 2.

THIRTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

OF THE BENEFITS BESTOWED ON OUR BODY.

THOU hadst set down, O Lord, in Thy divine understanding to make man, composed of body and soul, which are two substances very diverse, and contrary one to the other, and yet is there, for all that, such a brotherhood and love betwixt them that they communicate their good and evil the one with the other. The soul is joyful with those things that cause joy to her body, and sorroweth at those things that disquiet it; Thy divine ordinance hath ordained for every sense of the body many and divers delights wherewithal to entertain themselves for the short space that they are to remain here on earth.

Who is able to express how many things Thou hast created to content the eyes? The light was a pleasant creature, for by it all other things are seen and discerned. Many and divers are the colours which Thy wisdom hath devised, that in every one of them our eyes might take delight, and that every man might find that which may most content him and whereto he was most affected. How many tastes hast Thou put in Thy creatures, to delight the sense of our taste? Who were able to declare the fragrant savour that Thou hast given to flowers and sweet spices to delight the sense of our smelling? And what shall I say of such harmonious music as Thou hast taught the little birds to give solace and recreation to our hearing, besides that which Thou hast taught men by voice and sound of musical instruments, which

yieldeth a wonderful delight? O pleasure both to the soul and the body! Herewithal did David cast out the evil spirit that tormented Saul,* and the Prophet Eliseus lifted up his spirit of devotion to pray and to know Thy will.†

Thou hast created beasts of great force and strength, and made them tame to serve us and carry our heavy burthens, that man might not labour himself, and that of them he might be clad and apparelled, and to enjoy fruits also of divers tastes to please our appetite and to give him delight. And many medicines hast Thou provided for our diseases; the very serpents and vipers Thou hast converted to wholesome medicine for man. Thou appointest man a dwelling-place, and ordainest him a table before Thou createdst him, creating first the heaven and the earth, and the elements and all other things. If Thou hadst created me before these things then should I have seen in what need I stand of them. Whereupon should I have set my feet if there had been no earth? And with what air should I have breathed and lived if Thou hadst not created it? The hangman doth no more to hang one but take away the air wherewith he liveth, and whoso cutteth the cord quickly restoreth him to life.

O my God, Who every moment cuttest the cord, giving me air wherewith to live, and yet am I not thankful for this favour; and, to come more particularly to the creation of the person of man, amongst all earthly bodies which hath most beauty, graces, and worthiness, is the body of man, for as

* 1 Kings xvi. 23. † 4 Kings iii. 15.

well his mean stature as that he goeth upright towards heaven do show that it is of greatest perfection, the form of our body being like the universal frame of the world. As Thou, my God, hast beautified the heavens with the sun and moon that Thou hast placed in them, so hast Thou likewise dealt with man, placing in the highest part of his body the eyes, wherein he may see all that is profitable or hurtful to the body, and being so little as they are, the mighty heavens, the high mountains, the large valleys and fields, and the huge seas are so within their reach that we may behold them at an instant. And what shall I say of the hands? What goldsmith of any metal more excellent than gold, were able to make a hand with such sleight and cunning that it should open and shut at the joints, and that, continually working, it should never waste nor be consumed; there could no metal be found so profitable nor meet for the purpose. If the hands of a labouring man were of gold, it may be they would be wasted in a year, and yet these in a hundred years neither waste nor consume, being made of a little clay. "Oh, how great are Thy works, O Lord; Thou hast made all things wisely."* And what shall I say of the other senses? They are all placed orderly in the head with a wonderful composition, and this hath the government and maintenance of all the rest of the members, which are as it were her servants. Some of them it commandeth to carry burthens, others to receive food, others to defend and hazard themselves for guard of their head, and all of them obey her.

* Psalm xci. 6; ciii. 24.

And who, then, is able to consider the heavenly wisdom wherewith Thou framest the ears, and with what beauty and profit Thou hast placed them before the sense of hearing, that the sounds may be received and tempered in them, not to enter violently into the organ of the noble sense thereby to distemper it. Thou hast placed the ears as portals against cold and heat, to defend that nothing may enter in to hurt the hearing, and that music may with more delight and sweetness enter in by so many creeks.

If I come to the consideration of the mouth, to the tongue, nose, throat, and other members, time would not serve to contemplate their perfections, offices, and worthiness, which teach us very well Thy high wisdom, and how bountiful Thou hast showed Thyself in Thy benefits unto man at the beginning of his creation.

I will not now treat of the excellency of our soul, whereof I will speak hereafter, but my understanding faileth in consideration of the composition and workmanship of this human body. Yet marvel I more at the honour and favour that Thou hast done it after Thou hadst created it in so great perfection.

Thou hast so much esteemed this our body that, to honour this work that Thy hands framed, it pleased Thee in the Old Testament to clad Thyself with the robes of this human body, appearing in shape of man a long time before Thou tookest flesh. It is an honour to the habit of any Religious Order when a King putteth it on at his death to be buried in it, and much more if he had worn it in his lifetime.

O my God, and how much hath it pleased Thee to

honour our bodies, seeing that so many times in life Thou hast appeared clothed in this robe and habit. Thou didst not only pretend to appear in that form which might be convenient and proportionable for those men with whom Thou hadst to deal, but also, taking pleasure and assaying the robe of true flesh which Thou wert afterwards to put on and never after to put off, Thou talkedst with the old Fathers, and appearedst unto them in form of a man, for that Thy delights are to be with the children of men,* and to appear unto them, and therefore saith the holy Apostle that Thou never tookest upon Thee the nature of Angels, but of man Thou hast.†

What meaneth this "never"? Once Thou becamest true and perfect Man in the Virgin's womb, and as Thou appearedst some time in form of man, and never in form of an Angel, therefore saith the Apostle that God never took on Him the nature of Angels. And seeing, then, Thou hast given so great honour, O my God, to this human body, what shall I gather hereby but learn, as Thy Apostle saith, to possess the vessel of my body in honour and sanctification.‡

Although there were no other reason to possess this body in honour and honesty, abhorring the delights and appetites wherewith the wicked do defile it, yet ought this alone to suffice to move one to love chastity. "Know ye not," saith the holy Apostle, "your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost."§ Our Lord will destroy him that shall violate and defile this temple. It ought suffice me to make great account of the

* Prov. viii. 31. † Heb. ii. 16. ‡ 1 Thess. iv. 4.
§ 1 Cor. vi. 19.

temple of my body to know that Thou, O Lord, hast joined our humanity with Thyself in one subject. Of this honour and favour that Thou hast done us there ought not grow in us any pride, but a fear to violate this body with dishonest actions, seeing it hath been consecrated a temple and mansion for the Holy Ghost, wherein Thy Divine Majesty taketh a delight to dwell.

Thou has showed Thyself wonderful in the creation of man's body, and no man is able to declare the harmony and concord that is in it for the conservation, sustentation, and maintenance of it. Who is able to express the authority that Thou hast placed in this body, that all other living creatures, even the most strong and cruel beasts, should fear it and reverence it?

I know hereby, my God, the great obligation wherein I am bound to love Thee. How Thou callest me to Thy holy love, by what way which Thou knowest I would walk: for as the imperfect do much esteem the good of the body, yea, and sometimes more than that of the soul, so hast Thou, O God, with great liberality, given unto their bodies so many perfections, that these at the least may serve them for matter, out of which to strike the fire of Thy holy love.

THIRTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

OF THE GOODS OF NATURE BESTOWED ON OUR SOUL.

THOU hast created my soul, O Lord, not by commanding with a royal majesty, as when Thou createdst other creatures, but to show the worthiness and pre-eminence of man, Thou wroughtest his creation, not by voice of commandment, but with words of advice and counsel, saying, "Let us make man to our own image and likeness, and let him be lord of the fishes of the sea, of the fowls of the air, and of the beasts of the earth."* And like as a painter, who taketh upon him to paint some large table, distributeth amongst his servants and workmen many outward piers and borders; but the picture in the midst, and chiefest work, he reserveth to himself, and finisheth it with his own hand, as a thing to be set out to the view of the world: so Thou, our Creator, in painting this universal machine of creatures and frame of the world, commandedst the earth that it should bring forth herbs, birds, and beasts, and the water fishes, and these creatures proceed by the power of the matter of these elements; but man, which was lord of all things created, Thou framedst with Thine own hand, putting all other creatures besides under his seigniory and dominion.

All creatures do, in a most high and lofty manner, preach and publish Thy seigniory, confessing Thee the universal Creator, and submitting themselves to Thy will; and so likewise doth every one of them in

* Gen. i. 26.

their degree confess that man hath this dignity because he is made after Thy image; for we plainly see that none yield this kind of obedience and service to any other, how much soever they excel them, and yet all do obey man. Unto every creature of the earth Thou hast given some small participation of Thy being and virtues, and in every one of them there shineth some sign and savour of Thee, and so every one in his kind hath received a gift and great favour; but Thou hast dealt far better with man, imprinting unto him Thy very true image, and that not in any accident that may be corrupted and decay, and so he thereby lose it; but in the incorruptible substance of his soul, Thou hast given him the riches of Thine image, Thou hast ordained it with divine brightness, showing the light of Thy countenance upon it, and giving it jewels and virtues of grace, that such an image may not be created without some beauty. Thou hast given it so large a being and capacity, that Thy divinity and majesty dwelleth in it, so that it is magnified above all the creatures of the earth. In that man is Thy image, he is capable of Thee, and being capable of Thee, nothing is able to fill his capacity and desire, seeing that all creatures are nothing in comparison of Thee; and therefore, "As the hart desireth the fountains of waters, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God."* The Prodigal Son well showed this hunger, for no meats were able to content his will, or satisfy his appetite, so long as he was out of his father's house;† and what can my soul do, being of so great capacity, but wander, like

* Psalm xli. 2. † St. Luke xv. 17.

another Agar, through the desert of the world and solitary places of the earth, out of the house of Abraham,* and so die for thirst, being separated from Thee, my God, Who art the Fountain of lively waters, my only good and everlasting refuge. Thou reservedst man for great matters when Thou createdst him of so great perfection. Although my soul be not of Thy nature, Who art God, yet will I consider Thy image in it, for as Thou art one in essence, so is my soul, containing all the powers, with a vegetary, sensible and reasonable life, that by this means it may participate of all that hath life, as well plants as brute beasts and Angels.

Thou hast made it so like unto Thee, that as Thou art immortal, invisible, a spirit, and everlasting, so is my soul likewise. In contemplating this so excellent a creature, there are many that have said that it is a great miracle; others that it is a total sum of the world, wherein Thou hadst summoned and recollected all that ever is to be seen in this so wide and beautiful form of the world. No wise man will build rich houses, gilded halls, painted quadrangles with pillars of jasper, to put therein hens or doves. The frame and beauty of a house must be answerable to the quality and authority of the person that shall dwell in it. Thou hast created, O Lord, this world, Thou hast adorned it with divers sorts of flowers and painted hues; Thou hast placed glistening stars in the firmament, and hast beautified the heavens with bright and clear planets; and finally, this universal frame, with the whole circuit of the earth and heavens, Thou hast created for man.

* Gen. xxi. 14.

By the house that Thou hast built him I know his nobleness, and therefore saith David that he was little less than the Angels, and Thou hadst placed him supreme head over all things created, and if the body be such as we see, what manner of thing must the soul needs be which inhabiteth such a body. What should I here say, O my Creator, but sing with the Prophet, saying, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what great things He hath done for my soul."* If a wise and discreet King should give a million for finding a pearl that he had lost, how much might we think that the pearl was worth? Behold then, my soul, and understand thine own value, seeing thou having been lost by sin, God esteemed thee so much that He sent His only-begotten Son to seek thee in this world with much pain and travail, and that for finding thee He gave not a million, nor Heaven, nor earth, for all this was but little, but He gave Himself, which is all that could be, and as much as God with all His omnipotent power was able to give.

Behold then the price that was given for thee and what thou art, and art worth. "You have not been redeemed with gold and silver which are corruptible things,"† saith the Apostle St. Peter, "but with the precious Blood of the immaculate and unspotted Lamb, Jesus Christ."

This only consideration ought to suffice, O my Lord, to make great account of myself, seeing my essence and value, and seeing Thou hast given Thy Blood for me, which is of infinite price. It is not meet that I give myself for anything that is less worth than myself.

* Psalm lxv. 16. † 1 St. Peter i. 18, 19.

I am very far off, O Lord, for selling my soul for any earthly thing, seeing I know it hath been bought with such an inestimable price.

Hereunto Thy holy Apostle admonishes us, saying, "You are bought with a great price, glorify and bear God in your body,"* make great account of yourselves and leave not anything in your body that is worse than yourselves. And the same Apostle in another place saith, "You were bought with great price, be not made the bondslaves of men."† It is not meet, O Lord, that I be bondsman to any but to Thee only, Who art God and Man, and hast bought me with Thy precious Blood; unto Thee only will I yield my soul for which Thou hast given Thine own life. It were a very unmeet thing and far off from all reason, to put burning coals in a purse of silk and gold made for to keep pearls, or to put dung in vessels appointed for precious liquor, or to feed swine in plate wherein the King should be served. Oh, how far worse and more unseemly sight shall it be in the soul created for the treasures of Heaven, to cast in the dung of the world and to put sin into a vessel of grace, and to feed sin and filthy sensual appetites in those powers wherein Thou, my God and King of Glory, art and oughtest to be served.

It is a thing well known that likeness is a cause of love, and that everything in the world loveth its like, and because Thou wouldst cause in me the greater love and affection Thou hast therefore made me to Thy likeness. Thou dealest about greater matters than these that are present, seeing that Thou daily

* 1 Cor. vi. 20. † 1 Cor. vii. 23.

bestowest on us infinite favours; and both in the one and the other Thou showest Thy liberality and most sweet love, in that so freely without all desert on our part Thou exaltest us. This was the beginning of the benefits; whereby we may conceive what shall be the midst and the end, for that the rest must needs declare greater love. Thou hast given moreover unto my soul such liberty and freedom unto good and evil, that even then when it hath offended Thee by breaking Thy commandments it might be able to convert and turn unto it by penance and repentance, and so be restored to its former place and dignity. This favour continueth all the time of this life, which was not granted to the Angels, for so soon as they had sinned and were confirmed in their will, they were cast down and destroyed without any remedy, remaining obstinate and condemned for ever.

THIRTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

OF THE BENEFIT OF GRACE GIVEN UNTO OUR SOULS.

OPEN then thine eyes, O my soul, prepare and make ready thine heart to receive the treasure of the great love that Almighty God hath borne thee in giving thee the excellent benefit of His grace. Now He procureth thee a more high being and greater dignity, now He giveth thee the riches of His glory, now He allieth thee with His royal and divine stock, now He maketh Thee of His chamber and clotheth thee with apparel meet for His presence, and giveth thee a meritorious beginning of heavenly life for ever. Without this grace, all the benefits of nature that our Lord bestowed on thee when He created thee, were but to make thee noble in this present life, and not to give thee the eternal bliss and felicity for which man was created.

This benefit of grace is so great that all these natural gifts are not able to attain unto it unless God put to His grace. The grace of God is everlasting life. On the first father of our lineage and stock Thou bestowedst, O Lord, many excellent gifts and favours, for in Him were received justice and grace, and the light of understanding, which was given him as it were by inheritance unto him and his heirs descending of him; but he offending Thy divine Majesty, we were all made the children of wrath and banished from the Kingdom of Heaven, by the malicious procurement and envy of the old enemy the devil. And what didst Thou then,

our great and dear Lover? Didst Thou haply destroy and forsake that creature which Thy hands had formed of such excellent worthiness, and which had willingly thrust itself into so great misery? No! his wickedness dried not up Thy infinite goodness, but as Thou hadst prepared for him gifts and graces before, so now dost Thou promise him far greater, now Thou preparedst for him Thy dear and only Son, that being made man He might die and enrich and save us sinners.

O infinite charity of Thee my God, O good Lord and my true Lover, Who hast not despised him that so little esteemed Thee, but hast looked on him with the eyes of greater mercy, and hast given him greater benefits and more perfect salvation, and, according to that which the Apostle saith, that the offence of Adam and the gift of redemption were not equal, for "where sin abounded grace did much more abound."* The gift overcame the offence, and Thou wert, O Lord, of greater power to cure us than that old sin of our first father and all our old sins were able to wound us.

Hereby might we easily understand how much Thou hast loved us, seeing that Thou hast given us Thy grace by such a means, so greatly to Thy cost and so much to our honour. We remained so wounded in natural gifts and so despoiled of the benefits of grace, that without Thy special help and favour we are not able to do, no, nor to think any good thing, according to that which Thy holy Apostle writeth to the Corinthians; we are not sufficient to think anything of ourselves touching our salvation unless we be quickened by God, but all our sufficiency cometh of His gift and

* Rom. v. 20.

graces.* I remained so weak, so blind and so given over to my frailty, that I have neither force nor power to work my salvation, were I not called and awakened by Thee my God; and much less should I be able to exercise myself in Thy holy service and to work meritorious works for life everlasting, if Thou didst not touch me with Thy holy Hand and give me Thy grace to purchase my salvation. My will was so wounded that it could not without Thy grace love Thee above all things nor dispose and direct all its works unto Thee.

It is natural to all creatures, not only reasonable, but brute beasts also and others which have not the use of sense, to love Thee above all things, every one within the bounds of their knowledge and appetite. But miserable, wretched man, being left to his own infirmity and weakness, inclineth his will disorderly in his own self-love through the corruption of nature, and cannot love God above all things, unless it be cured with the help of grace, that Thy divine ordinance may enter into it, whereby Thou mayest convert all things to Thy love. With this grace man directeth his love unto Thy love, and taketh and chooseth Thee for his last end and scope of his love and of all things that he liketh and desireth.

Hereby I understand how impossible it is for us to keep Thy commandments without this Thy divine grace, which may cure and make strong this our weak and infirm nature, mortally wounded. Our understanding also remained no less despoiled of original grace and justice and wounded with blindness, and

* 2 Cor. iii. 5.

the will with its own passions, than the man who went down from Jerusalem unto Jericho and fell among thieves, was spoiled, robbed, and sore wounded. We went down from the vision of peace, quietness, and the peaceable life of grace that we had, being spoiled and robbed by sin, but Thou O Lord, my very true neighbour and true friend, like unto the Samaritan, camest down from Heaven to earth to heal our stripes and to close up our wounds, washing them with Thine own Blood. Thou restoredst us the grace which we had lost, and many rich gifts withal of the Holy Ghost and wholesome Sacraments, and favours to obtain Heaven, which through our fault we had lost.

Thou gavest us the benefit of grace, which like a light, burning lamp or torch, might show us what we ought to do, or rather as a gift which effectually gives us these good works themselves with the help of free-will. This grace not only lighteneth the blind to see what they ought to do, but also giveth them power and strength to do those works with charity and love which now they know they ought to do. No tongue, O Lord, is able to declare the worthiness and excellency of man when Thou adornest his soul with Thy divine grace, for thereby he is called the son of God by adoption, and inheritor,* jointly with Thee, of the Kingdom of Heaven. If the soul could see herself in the beauty of grace that Thou hast given her, it could never love any other creature more than herself. Bless thou, therefore, O my soul, thy Lord. My God, thou hast wonderfully exalted me. Thou wouldst not, Lord, that we should see in this life our souls,

* Rom. viii. 17.

for if when we are in grace and possess Thy holy love we should see her beauty and bravery, it may be that we should so fall in love and liking of ourselves, by seeing us so perfect and beautiful, that it would fall out unto us as it did to the Angels of Heaven, who, enamoured of their beauty, grew proud, and thereby falling from that high estate, lost that beauty of grace which they had, and that high place whereto they were created, without all hope to recover it again; and if, contrariwise, we should see our soul out of thy grace and deprived of it, so filthy, and as a Prophet saith, much blacker than coals, we might thereby take occasion to despair, and so distrust of her recovery.

THIRTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

OF THE BENEFIT OF THIS DIVINE GRACE AND LOVE.

HOW much good hast Thou done on us, O Lord, and how great is the love that Thou hast borne us, seeing that with such liberality and in such abundance Thou hast given us all that we stood so greatly in need of? Thou hast given me with Thy grace a very sure pledge and assurance of Thy blessed and everlasting glory to be a means whereby to attain to that heavenly heritage; Thou hast made me a citizen of Heaven, a companion of Angels, and partaker of Thy divine treasures; Thou hast made my soul more beautiful than Heaven and earth, or than any other earthly inferior creature;

Thou hast made it lady of the world, served of Angels, and terrible and dreadful to the devils.

O infinite goodness of my God and sovereign bounty, what am I able to do in Thy service for so great and innumerable benefits or sweetness of my life? And what am I, vile seely worm of the earth, that Thou, being as Thou art God of so high majesty, makest so great reckoning of me? What is man, the son of Adam, a sinner, a vessel of corruption and a coffer wherein is locked up all iniquity and frailty, that Thou so magnifiest him and settest Thy heart upon him?* In giving him Thy grace Thou givest him Thy friendship and love; of a servant of the devil he is made Thy son, and of an inhabitant of the infernal Babylon by Thy grace He is made a citizen of the celestial Jerusalem.

O King of Glory, pardon my boldness in that I presume to speak to Thee and to approach before Thy divine presence. I know mine unworthiness, and that I deserve not to lift up mine eyes before Thee, seeing myself so bare and naked of virtues, and so heavy laden with vices, and would willingly hide myself from Thy face, but whither shall I go and not find Thee? "If I ascend up to Heaven Thou art there, and if I go down to hell I find Thee there also."† If it be to my confusion and shame to appear so naked of all goodness before Thy divine majesty, who shall be able to furnish me and give me redress, and to make me meet for Thy presence, but only Thou, O Lord, Who hast clothed the heaven and the earth with wonderful beauty? "Who can make him

* Job vii. 17. † Psalm cxxxviii. 8.

clean that was conceived and formed of unclean matter? Thou art only He that can do this."* I am ashamed to appear before Thee being as I am, but now seeing that I cannot hide myself from Thee, and that Thou only art able to redress my necessity and poverty, clothe me, O Lord, with Thy grace, that I may come unto Thee. My heart is afflicted and my soul beset and compassed with grief in seeing herself assailed with two contraries; for on the one side I know that my filthiness deserveth not to appear before Thy most pure and clean eyes, on the other side I see that although I would fly from Thee I cannot. What mean can be given in such a contrariety but only most humbly to beseech Thee that seeing now I cannot fly from Thee, Thou wilt vouchsafe to make me meet for Thy presence, seeing without it I will not nor cannot live?

Thou most merciful and benign Lord, Who, restraining Thy justice and extending Thy mercy upon us, camest down from Heaven upon earth to clothe the nakedness of our souls with grace and to bestow it upon us, didst put Thyself upon the Cross. Send it now, O Lord, from Thy high throne of Thy glory, not respecting the small desert on my part, for if grace be given upon desert it is no grace; the more unworthy that I am, the more glorified shalt Thou be. With help of Thy grace I shall be able perfectly to keep Thy commandments, and to love Thee above all things, for without it I am able to do neither of them fully and perfectly, and what shall become of me without Thy love and observation of Thy law?

* Job xiv. 4.

What creature should be more vile than man without Thy love? and without obeying Thy commandments, all other creatures besides man do love Thee, and serve Thee, and swerve not one iota from Thy commandment, and although Thou commandedst them that which is contrary, yet at an instant they do meekly obey Thee. Thou commandedst the waters of the Red Sea to give place that the people of Israel might pass through, and the river of Jordan to go backward, and the sun to stay and stand still, the fire not to burn the children in the furnace of Babylon, the whale to receive the Prophet Jonas in his belly, and the hungry lions not to touch Daniel, and all these did forthwith obey Thee. Only man alone is made in his will so miserable that he falleth from that worthiness which all other creatures do possess by losing Thy holy love, for he neither obeyeth Thee nor is able to fulfil Thy commandments as he ought, having lost Thy grace.

Blessed be Thou, O Lord, for evermore, seeing Thou hast enkindled again the fire of Thy holy love in our souls, and dost heal our wills that we may be able to love Thee and serve Thee; for besides that herein consisteth our everlasting life of body and soul, and an honour of not being brutish beasts, it was further a mean of Thy honour and glory which man had so much dishonoured. This ought, O my soul, to be of great price in Thy sight. When Thou shalt come to this degree of sense and understanding, thou art to give more thanks unto God for that He hath given thee grace and means whereby to magnify and honour His name, than for that He hath delivered thee from

death and given Thee His knowledge. Make great account of this, that thou art able with the grace of thy God to glorify Him upon earth; yea, and with those works which are plainly repugnant to our natural delight and appetite, yea, and to our own life. I shall now be able to fast by the power and virtue of His grace, to pardon injuries, watch in prayer, go in pilgrimage, keep perpetual chastity, yea, and to die, offering myself up unto martyrdom as many holy Martyrs have done. Any one of these works whereof a man out of the state of grace hath none of the principle, being done with equal grace and endeavour on our parts, are greatly to the honour of Thee, my God, and much to the honour of man.

Man now layeth out more of his own substance, and serveth God with greater charge by mortification of his body, appetites, and desires, than he served before out of the state of grace. Know thou then, my soul, the great benefit of grace that God hath given thee, seeing that without it thou wert not able to serve thyself, and that it hath been given thee freely, and not for any desert of thine. And understand how much God bindeth thee to love Him, seeing that He hath bestowed on thee so great a benefit. This is a great good that God hath done thee, for that God in giving thee His grace, His divine majesty dwelleth and remaineth in us, and that so long as the lamp of faith burneth with the fire of charity and divine love. Feed thou, therefore, now this lamp of oil with continual meditation of the love that thy Spouse, Jesus Christ, doth bear thee, and it shall burn and remain in

thyself by grace until such time as He give thee the great good of His glory, which He hath promised unto thee.

FORTIETH MEDITATION.

OF THE EVILS FROM WHICH GOD HATH DELIVERED US.

HAVING in some sort in the former meditations begun to treat of that which can never be sufficiently spoken of, nor we sufficiently thankful for, as the favours done and the benefits bestowed by Thy bountiful hands upon us sinners, for which we are bound to love Thee above all things; it shall not be amiss to treat of the second and third kind of gifts, which are of the evils from which Thou hast delivered and preserved us, and of the great good that Thou hast promised to us. Of these spake David in those verses of the Psalm where he reckoneth up the three kinds of benefits—which are the benefits bestowed on us, the evils from which Thou hast delivered us, and the bliss which Thou hast promised us—when he sayeth, Turn thee, my soul, to thy rest and joy, for thy Lord hath done thee good; He hath delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.* Having already somewhat touched the benefits bestowed on us, there remaineth now, my soul, that thou turn thee unto thy God, and, as another phœnix, that thou burn in the fire of love which thou owest unto so noble a benefactor,

* Psalm lv. 13; cxiv. 8.

seeing that He hath delivered thee from eternal death of hell, and from the continual wailings and everlasting torments of the same. O Spouse of my soul and God of my heart, what deserved I in Thy heavenly sight before I was, that Thou shouldst so carefully prevent me, first bestowing upon me such and so infinite benefits as Thou hast done, and preserving me from so many mischiefs as without Thee I had fallen into. All this is to be attributed to Thy grace and infinite goodness, wherewith Thou lovedst me before I had being for Thine own sake, and only without any desert on my part; and besides that Thou madest me not an insensible creature, as a tree or a stone, nor an insensible beast, but a man created to Thy image and likeness, and capable of Thy grace.

It was in Thy power to make me to be conceived of infidel parents, Moors, heretics, Gentiles, or Jews, and being so born in darkness, to lead my life in the blindness of those errors, and to burn afterwards in everlasting fire, separated from Thy heavenly sight, as we see an infinite number are, who, dying out of the unity of Thy holy Catholic Church, are destroyed and condemned, and everlastingly tormented in the inferior prisons.

O my God and my Lord, wherewithal shall I repay Thee this so great a favour, in that Thou hast lightened me with the light of Thy faith by causing me at the first to be born of Catholic parents and Christian. The ancient enemy of man sought to have strangled me in my mother's womb after I was conceived, but Thou, my God, Who wert so diligent in doing me good, through that incredible and vigilant care that

Thou hadst of me at the very moment Thou createdst my soul, didst appoint it an Angel of Heaven to keep and preserve it, and to defend it from my enemy.

This is a great favour surely that Thou hast appointed to serve and preserve me a kind of blessed spirits, in corporal bodies immaterial and incorruptible, and which do always behold the divine face of Thy Father in Heaven,* whereupon the Psalmist saith, that He hath commanded His Angels to keep thee in all thy ways.† How many have there been that by permission of Thy Divine Majesty have died after they were conceived before they were born, and being not cleansed from original sin by the water of holy Baptism, are now, and for ever shall be, deprived of the blessed sight of Thy heavenly face! The self same might have happened unto me if Thou, my God, with Thy loving hand, had not preserved and defended me from death. Thou hast brought me forth to light, Thou hast made me a Christian, Thou hast infused in my soul Thy holy faith, sure and certain hope, and perfect charity; Thou hast made my soul like unto Thy holy Angels, innocent, holy without spot of sin, clad with grace, adorned with virtues and spiritual gifts in holy Baptism; and what have I done after the time I knew Thee, and since that I was lightened with the use of reason? Woe is me that I first knew how to offend Thee! What hath the whole course of my life past been but a continual exercise of sins? Wherein have Thou and I, O Lord, occupied ourselves in former years so evil spent, but I in offending Thee,

* St. Matt. xviii. 10. † St. Luke iv. 10; Psalm xc. 11.

and Thou in forgiving me? Thou wert never weary in doing me good, and I was never weary in displeasing Him Whom I had so great and so good reason for to serve. How long shall I continue after this sort, how long shall I say with myself, "To-morrow, to-morrow, tarry me yet a little, tarry a little?" Dost Thou despise, O my soul, the riches of the goodness of thy God, of His long suffering and patience? Seest thou not that the mercy of God draweth thee unto penance, but thou, through thy impenitence and hardness of heart, heapest up treasures of the wrath of God.* All things, O Lord, do make me weary: I am weary with going and standing still; I am weary with sitting and standing on my feet; I am weary of my bed, of music, of eating and drinking; and yet am I never weary of sinning. I have always found Thee a loving Father, a true Friend, a liberal Lord, a bountiful Benefactor, a most merciful Judge, and a Forgiver of my sins, which are infinite and immeasurable. Thou hast always been unto me myrrh in my sadness, a remedy of my mischiefs, the curer of my infirmities, the comforter of my discontentments, long and patient in expecting me, gentle in receiving me, and merciful in forgiving me. I have always been towards Thee ungrateful for Thy benefits, disobedient to Thy commandments, unthankful for the favours Thou hast showed me, and unmindful of the duty that I owe Thee, and have lived as though I knew Thee not, and as that Thou had not been present in all my works. What goodness so great that my wickedness would not make an end of it; and who would

* Rom. ii. 5.

not be weary of giving, and close his hand, seeing on my part so great unthankfulness? At the time that I most deserved hell, Thou showedst me, O Lord, the greatest favours, and Thy greatest mercy rained down upon my soul.

Let us enter then, now, into reckoning, O my God. If when I was separated from Thy grace—and may it please Thy divine mercy that it fall not out so unto me at this present—if, then, I had died, as my sins deserved, where had I now been? Severed from Thee and Thy holy Angels, banished from glory, disinherited of Heaven, a companion of the devils Thine enemies, and tormented with so cruel torments, that the least of innumerable that the damned suffer is greater than can be in this life imagined; and yet are these intolerable torments of less grief and pain than it were to see myself separated from Thy heavenly sight for ever, without all hope ever to be able to enjoy it.

O most bitter and cruel pain, what should have become of me, then, if I had been separated from Thy divine presence, seeing that my soul imprisoned in this mortal body, even as the hart desireth the fountain of water, so longeth she to go unto Thee and be with Thee,* labouring all that she may, and sighing for to enjoy Thy divine essence, what would she have done, seeing herself so deprived of that hope which now she hath to live with Thee in Heaven? I have patiently endured the painful toils and griefs of this miserable life, upon hope that I have that the day will come when my soul, being set free and delivered from the heavy lumpishness of my flesh, shall rest

* Psalm xli. 2.

with her Spouse Jesus Christ in His glory. What life should I have lead, then, seeing myself deprived of that hope, that is no life, but a continual and everlasting death, which those cursed caitiffs lead that are in hell, of whom the Scripture saith that death is their food.*

Thou, O Lord, of Thy infinite goodness and great mercy hast delivered me from those horrible and dreadful torments, withholding death from carrying me away, and prolonging my life that I might convert, inspiring me, and striking hard strokes on my heart, that I might call upon Thee, lightening me that I might know Thee, and giving me bodily health that I might do penance. When I fled most from Thee, Thou followedst me; Thou soughtest me when by sinning I went astray from Thee. And Thou, being the party offended, showing me Thy bloody stripes and wide wound in Thy side, desiredst pardon for me. And Thou hast not only delivered me from so many former mischiefs, but hast also preserved and kept me from many other sins which I had committed, if Thou, O Lord, of Thy great mercy, with Thy loving hand hadst not held me up from falling into them. Wherefore, O my soul, praise thou always thy God; bless Him and love Him above all things, for He hath bestowed on thee many benefits, He hath delivered thee from everlasting death; thy eyes from the infernal tears and wailings, and thy feet from falling, holding thee up with His hand that thou mightest not fall into many mischiefs and sins, which thou hadst done but that His divine mercy stayed thee from committing them.

* Psalm xlviii. 15.

FORTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

OF THE GOODS THAT ARE PROMISED UNTO US.

I SEE myself so compassed about and environed with bonds of duty, whereby I am bound to serve Thee, O my God and my whole bliss, for the infinite benefits which I have received and do hourly receive of Thy bounteous liberality, that, in considering thereof, my judgment is amazed, my tongue mute, and all the powers of my soul in suspense and astonished. Thou dost not only show Thine infinite goodness and magnificence in being willing that we should love Thee, and in vouchsafing (being He that Thou art) to be beloved of us vile and wretched creatures, but that which causeth great, wonderful, and most extreme admiration to all men of reason is to see, that for so light and sweet a precept as is the commandment of love, Thou promisest the reward of glory and life everlasting.

This is that which Thy holy Apostle saith, "Neither eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard, neither hath it ascended into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him."* O unspeakable bounty of my God, that unto such as do love Thee Thou promisest so great matters, and what reason is there to give reward for love? What toil, what grief, what difficulty, what bitterness and pain is there in love? Love is a sufficient reward for itself. Love of God is more amiable than whatsoever can be loved, except God Himself, and more to be desired than all

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

that possibly can be desired; and yet for all this, Thou addest a reward and recompense. It is a marvellous thing, O Lord, that Thou gavest love for love, grace for grace, paradise for paradise, and gift upon gift. When Thou rewardest our merits, what dost Thou else but reward Thine own gifts and benefits, seeing all our merit is nought else but Thy gift. Who can choose but marvel at such immeasurable bounty and magnificence? Who ever saw one set precious and dainty meats before a hungry man to eat, and to give him reward for eating? Or to give a thirsty man drink, and to reward him for drinking? And thus dealest Thou with us, most bountiful Lord, when to such as desire Thy love Thou givest it them freely, and dost further promise them Thy glory hereafter for it.

What magnificence is this, O Lord, that Thou feignest a painfulness in the most pleasant commandment of love, containing in very deed nothing but delight and sweetness, to the end that Thou mayest take occasion to reward us, and that which is no pains Thou rewardest as though it were painful; so great is Thy desire, O Lord, to do us good. Of Thee saith David, that Thou feignest a painfulness in Thy commandments;* for in the commandment of love, which is sweet and maketh all labours easy and pleasant, Thou feignest a kind of painfulness, thereby to take occasion to reward us. Love is a reward of itself, and in giving us glory for to love Thee, Thou givest us gift upon gift, favour upon favour, and glory upon glory. How, then, can this so good and liberal a

* Psalm xciii. 20.

Lord deny His due hire unto His servants, seeing that to those that labour not, for to cause them to love, He promiseth rewards as though they had laboured.

Such, O Lord, is Thy love, and so great and so exceeding good, that we ought to suffer any torments, how great and terrible soever they were, for to obtain it; and yet dost Thou not only give it us freely, but dost also reward it with Paradise and glory. Wherefore in Deuteronomy, after Thou hadst given the law unto the people of Israel, Thou commandedst them to love Thee,* and having given them the commandment of love, Thou didst tell them forthwith of the heavenly reward, saying, "Behold that the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's thy God." In that parable of him that sent labourers into his vineyard,† by dealing alike with all, and bargaining with them, Thou showedst Thy infinite goodness and mercy, seeing that Thou gavest the penny of everlasting bliss for so small a labour as is the keeping of Thy commandments, whereas we are bound by duty without any reward to observe them.

When a man hath a slave and sendeth him to his vineyard, he maketh no bargain with him to give him anything, but maketh him to go whether he will or no; for he that buyeth a slave buyeth with him all his works. And are not we, my God, Thy slaves, and bought with Thy Blood? "With a great price," saith St. Paul, "were we bought."‡ With the price of Thy most innocent Blood were we bought,§ saith

* Deut. x. 12, 14. † St. Matt. xx. 2. ‡ 1 Cor. vi. 20. § 1 Peter i. 19.

St. Peter. If, then, Thou hast bought us with such an inestimable price, Thou mayest forthwith, without giving us any reward, command and enforce us to love Thee and to keep Thy commandments.

By the only benefit of Thy Incarnation, without expecting any further reward at Thy hands, Thou mightest bind us to go naked, to eat nothing but herbs or roots, and as much else as we were able to do, and we were bound to accomplish it; but so great is Thy goodness, that whereas Thou mayest so do, and that justly, Thou wilt not but bargain with us and give like for like, promising us for reward everlasting life. Thou hast bargained with us, and hast bound Thyself to give us Thy glory, and that in such sort hast Thou vouchsafed to bind Thyself, that if we love Thee and keep Thy commandments, Thou canst not choose but give us Thy glory, and that in justice, for Thy word cannot fail.

The Apostle, after he had reckoned up his manifold labours to his disciple Timothy, addeth, saying: "There is laid up for me a crown of justice, and not only to me, but to them also that love His coming."* If Thou, O Lord, hadst not bound Thyself to give me Thy glory for keeping Thy law, no man could have required it at Thy hands of justice, for the passions and travails of this time, and all that man is able to do, are not worthy to make him deserve Thy everlasting bliss. But presupposing of Thy liberality, and the exceeding great love that Thou bearest me, through which of Thine own goodness, without any desert of my part, Thou hast vouchsafed to bind

* 2 Tim. iv. 8.

Thyself, Thou canst not now choose but perform Thy promise and word, for the word of a King, especially of such a King, cannot fail. Thou art He, O Lord, Who saith in Thy holy Gospel—"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."* To the labourers also that Thou sentest into the vineyard Thou gavest equal pay, promising them glory for their labour, and in making a covenant and bargain with us Thou handlest us as freemen, being Thy slaves, for men use not to bargain with their bondslaves but with freemen. And what a thing is this then, my Lord, that Thou hast not only done me so many good turns, and delivered me from so many evils, to make me to love Thee, but dost also promise me for my love life everlasting! If love be to be sold, no man will buy it at so dear a price as Thou, for Thou givest for it life everlasting.

Thou dost not only with so innumerable favours bind me to love Thee, but dost also make me very large promises to be beloved of me. Thou givest me life everlasting, whereof no tongue is able to speak, seeing it is impossible to express what the blessed find in Thee that do behold Thee, for they find what Thou art, although not in that greatness as Thou enjoyest of Thyself. Unto us both the one and the other is incomprehensible, whereupon it is said in the Apocalypse that in the counter that shall be to him that overcometh shall be written a name which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it;† and also that there shall be given him the hidden Manna, which is as much to say a kind of taste, that no man shall be able

* St. Matt. xix. 17. † Apoc. ii. 17.

to know but he that tasteth it; and so great a price for the victory, that whoso obtaineth it only shall be able to value it, yea, and those that enjoy it shall not be able to declare it, for so saith the Apostle, that it was not lawful for him to speak what there he saw,* for all that man is able to say unto man is so little, that it might be an occasion for men to make less account of it, which are so little able to enter into the undertaking of so high a matter, and so it is convenient that we know some part and guess at the other, wherefore the Apostle saith that here in this life we know it in some part.† If we should be altogether ignorant of it we could not love it, and if we had the full and perfect knowledge of it there remained nothing for us to desire, and therefore Thy wisdom doth temper it in such sort that we may know as much as is requisite to walk as one that goeth after the light of a candle, which lighteneth the darkness of this life, wherein is continual night, until the time, as St. Peter saith, the day do appear, and the day-star arise in our hearts.

* 2 Cor. xii. 4. † 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

FORTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

HOW LOVE IS THE FOUNDATION OF ALL THE BENEFITS OF GOD.

IN all the good turns that one man doth unto another, there is more regard to be had unto the love wherewith they are done than unto the quantity or greatness of the gift received. For be it never so much that is given, if he which receiveth it understand that it was given by force and compulsion, and against the will of the giver, he is not bound to be thankful for it.

The chief thing that is to be regarded in him that doth anything is the will and love wherewithal he doeth it. O Redeemer of the world, although Thou hast done much for us, and given us great gifts, and hast delivered us from many mischiefs, and hast promised us Thy eternal and everlasting bliss, yet is all this, being so much that it maketh one astonished and afraid, far less than the love that Thou bearest us. For love Thou gavest Thyself unto us; Thou camest down from Heaven; Thou tookest flesh, and diedst, and through the unspeakable love that Thou borest us Thou hast created and redeemed us, and gavest Thyself unto us in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, and deliveredst us from so many evils, and promisest us so great goods. Thy love is of such force towards us that the least favours that Thou doest us, coming polished with such singular fine love, we are never able to be sufficiently thankful for it, nor to

requite it, although we should thrust ourselves into flaming furnaces for love of Thee. And how much less then, seeing the works that Thou doest unto us are infinite, and so great that they cause an astonishment here on earth and admiration in Heaven. And if the favours be exceeding great that Thou showest us, and the benefits most excellent that Thou bestowest on us, much greater is the love that Thou bearest us, which exceedeth all understanding created, and passeth far the bounds of natural reason.

The foundation and root of all the gifts and favours that Thou bestowest upon us and showest us is Thy holy love; all the gifts that Thou hast given us are but signs and tokens of this love, which is the greatest and chief gift.

Behold, then, my soul, and consider well, if all these gifts proceed of love, how great the love must be that thy God doth bear unto thee, seeing that all the benefits above said, and infinite others besides, do flow and proceed from His immeasurable love. For if Thou, O Lord, hadst made the world and all things therein created for love of man, it followeth that Thou first lovedst man, and that of all other creatures Thou lovedst none but man, seeing Thou hast made them all for him; for in the means directed to any end we only love that end, and seeing Thy love doth infinitely without all comparison exceed all other things that ever Thou hast given us, and hast given us an infinite gift, and such a one as cannot possibly be valued, which gift, being as it is freely and of Thine own liberality bestowed upon us, man without doubt is more bounden unto Thee for this alone than for all the rest

of the gifts besides that he hath received of Thy bountiful hand, in that how many and great soever they be, they have end and measure, but Thy love is infinite and without all measure. It was not necessary for Thee that we should receive them, but of Thy only goodness and most bountiful freewill Thou hast bestowed them on us, and we have great need and necessity to receive them, for without them we were not able to live one moment. Now the bond of thankfulness which groweth upon any benefit is wont and ought to be so much the greater the more need he hath who receiveth, and with the more frank and free goodwill that one giveth it. And what need, O Lord, hadst Thou of us or of anything else that Thou hadst created for the love of us? None at all, surely, saith David. But how great need have we of thy gifts who are not able to live one minute without them? And if God love and set such store by His works, and by that which He hath made, it is not so much for that they are His works and that He made them, as for that He created them with so great love. Thou lovedst, O Lord, all things that Thou hast made, and abhorrest nothing, and although Thou lovest all things created, yet lovest Thou man more than all. If Thou wert to love any more than him, it should be the Angels, but this cometh far short, for when they were fallen Thou soughtest not to redeem them, nor tookest upon Thee the nature of Angels, but of man; and when man was lost Thou dealtest so earnestly for his redemption and salvation that Thou abhorredst Thy life and honour, making Thyself Man for his sake. And yet ceaseth not man for all this to

offend Thee, Thou being as Thou art, and he as Thou seest.

Thou dost naturally love Thyself, O my God, above all things; Thou lovest likewise Thy creatures, and Thou lovest them all in respect of me, seeing Thou hast put them all, as David saith,* under my feet, birds and living creatures, and all the beasts of the field. How were they able to continue if it pleased not Thee? and how could they be conserved if Thou lovedst not them? Thou pardonest us, O Lord, because Thou lovest us, and Thou receivest us with mercy for the great affection that Thou bearest us. This is that which Thou saidst by the Prophet,† "I have loved in perpetual charity, and therefore have drawn thee unto Me, having pity and compassion of thee." For love Thou hast given some virtue unto all things, and beheldest them when Thou hadst created them, and they were all good, for Thy goodness made them good.

If we love our parents that begat us, how much more ought we to love Thee, the Creator of our parents and our Maker? If I were blind and some man should restore me my sight, how much were I bound to love him? If I were born without feet or hands and that a man should give me hands to work and feet to walk, were I not bound to love such a benefactor? And what should I do then if, being dead, one should raise me to life, or, not being at all, he should give me the being that now I have? I would all the days of my life follow him, and serve him on my knees; I would kiss his feet and the earth that he trod on.

* Psalm viii. 8. † Jer. xxxi. 3.

O my Creator, and unto whom do I owe these mine eyes but unto Thee? Who gave me my feet and hands, body and soul, life and being, but Thou, my God, Who madest me of nothing? And if in these eyes, which to-morrow shall be converted into dust and ashes, Thou wouldst so magnify Thyself as that when Thou createdst them, Thou madest them able to behold the heaven, and the planets, the stars and brightness thereof, and the earth with her variety of colours and diversity of creatures: what manner of things must the inward eyes of the soul needs be which shall continue for ever? If this corporal substance be of so great excellency, of how much greater perfection and substance must this spiritual substance of my soul be which I see not? And after Thou hadst given me my body and soul, and all that I have and am worth, being dead by sin, Thou raisedst me to live again, and at Thy so great cost and charges, that to give me life Thou didst lose Thine own life: and for what frail, sinful, and imperfect man, in many points, that had showed me the least of all these favours which Thou my God hast done, being the chiefest good and infinite goodness, would not I have ventured my life for him? I would not have had respect unto his imperfections, but unto the benefit received, and would follow him through desolate mountains and valleys, serving him night and day, and would never think myself able to be sufficiently thankful for so great a benefit.

Wherefore then, my God and my whole bliss, hazard not I my life for Thee? seeing that Thou, being goodness itself and the most worthy substance of infinite love, hast dealt so liberally with me as to

give me being and life, soul and body, and all that I am; and which is more than these and all other Thy innumerable benefits which Thou hast bestowed on me, Thy creature and work of Thy hands, they proceed of love, for through love Thou createdst me, and for love Thou redeemedst, and therefore it is meet that I love Thee all that possibly I am able, and that I die wounded with Thy holy love.

FORTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

OF THE COMMANDMENT OF THE LOVE OF GOD.

THOU commandedst me, O Lord, that I love Thee, and that with a severe commandment; and threatenest me with grievous pains if I love Thee not. Thou confoundest me, O Lord, with this commandment. How am I, O Lord, so unthankful, being the work of Thy hands, and having received of Thee my being, and love being the beginning and fountain from whence all good things do spring and flow; and Thou having redeemed me with Thy most precious blood, Thou commandest me now for to love Thee. What needest Thou command me to love Thee? What need I any such commandment if, as a wise man saith, he that receiveth benefits receiveth chains to catch and entangle the heart. What heart can be so hard that, considering Thy many and great benefits, will not be inflamed in Thy love? How is it possible that I be so ungrateful as not to love Thee, having

such a number of reasons that bind me unto it. "What is man that Thou art so mindful of him; or the son of man that Thou makest so much reckoning of him?"* Thou hast, as Daniel saith,† Angels in Heaven, and millions of millions serve Thee, and many millions of them are always in Thy presence. And yet makest Thou account of a seely worm of the earth? Thou hast innumerable Seraphim which, inflamed in Thy love, are made burning flames, loving Thee perpetually without ceasing, and yet esteemest Thou so base a creature as man is, giving him strict charge and commandment to love Thee, promising him for it life everlasting, and threatening him with eternal pains of hell fire if he do it not. Thou mightest, O Lord, have commanded man some other things of greater difficulty, as to sacrifice their children, to build churches, to go on pilgrimage; but Thou esteemest not all this, only Thou makest great account that he love Thee. "The end of the commandment is charity," saith the Apostle,‡ the fulfilling of the whole law; and all that Thou requirest man is that he love Thee.

Might it please Thee, my God, that we men might know with how great zeal Thou requirest that we love Thee because Thou lovest me, and that earnestly Thou requirest at my hands that I love Thee? O pleasant, O light, O sweet and delectable precept! I give Thee thanks, my Lord, and many thanks for so gentle, acceptable, and grateful commandment as Thou hast given me. Thou hast pricked me, my God, with spurs to make me run freely. And what

* Psalm cxliii. 3. † Daniel vii. 10. ‡ 1 Tim. i. 5.

thing can there be more grateful or pleasant unto me than to love Thee. This would have been somewhat painful, impossible, and intollerable; and hell itself were in a manner more tolerable than to cease for to love Thee. When I think sometimes, or talk, or any man telleth me of the pains of hell, the thing that doth most terrify and make me afraid is, that they which are tormented in that miserable place do abhor, curse, or detest Thee. O wretched and most unhappy creatures! O unfortunate souls and worthy to be tormented, that do in this wise requite your Maker and your God for all His benefits that He hath bestowed on you. Thou never permittest me, O Lord, to cease from loving Thee, nor that ever my will should leave burning in the flames of Thy divine love. If I be forgetful of Thee, my God, let me forget my right hand, and let my tongue be glued in my throat. If I be not always mindful of Thee, and set Thee before mine eyes at the beginning of all my mirth.* "Oh, how good is the God of Israel to those that are of a clean heart."†

What a great goodness is this, O Lord, that Thou dost not only desire to be beloved of me, but doth also straitly command me for to love Thee! Who am I, or what is my substance in Thy sight, seeing Thou dost not only require that I love Thee, but dost also threaten me with everlasting torments if I love Thee not. What, O Lord! am I so great a matter in Thy presence, that Thou shouldst make so much account that I love Thee? I give Thee humble thanks, O Lord, that Thou dost so honour me, and

* Psalm cxxxvi. 5, 6. † Psalm lxxii. 1.

that Thou makest so great reckoning of me. Thou hadst done me a great favour in giving me leave, and how much more in commanding me, to love Thee.

Surely it would make one marvel if a mighty King should vouchsafe to let some rude and rustical poor shepherd keep the key of his closet, and give him liberty to enter to and fro at his pleasure, and to confer with the King as often as it pleaseth him. This were much, and yet not so much as it seemeth, for that in the end they are both men, and their natural being maketh them alike, although their estates be far different. And what a thing is this then, O Lord, that Thou, being God omnipotent and sovereign King of glory, givest liberty unto man, being a creature made by Thy mighty hands, to confer with Thee, and love Thee, and to contemplate Thy greatness, and to carry the key freely to enter in and out presenting himself before his Creator, and yielding Him his affections and desires. Who would not think this a singular favour? And yet hath Thy infinite goodness not only extended unto this, but Thou hast also commanded that I love Thee, and that so earnestly that Thou settest down the art and manner of love, saying that man must love Thee with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his understanding, and with all his force.*

Wherefore, O Lord, makest Thou so many repetitions in this commandment, and contentest not Thyself that we love Thee with all our heart, but addest three other things as great as the first, seeing that with the first we were as much bound as with all

* Deut. vi. 5; St. Matt. xxii. 37; St. Luke x. 27.

the rest that Thou hast added? Thou hast showed Thyself careful in requesting this our love. Of two things might conjecture the one, either that Thou intendedst to love us, and that very much, and therefore wouldst be well requited, or else that love is such a precious thing that Thou wouldst not lose a grain of it. If we should see a wise man diligently pick up and gather a herb of no account, we would think ourselves beguiled and hitherto deceived in some secret virtue that it containeth. Not one of these things only, but both of them may we hold for certain, for seeing Thou, O Lord, so carefully commandest us to love Thee, being so wise as Thou art, it is manifest that love is a jewel of great price, and that they are very much deceived that make not great account of it.

And the more to extol this love, and that we might understand how much Thou esteemest it, Thou hast written the laws of love that Thou hast given us with Thine own finger. Thou hast not written the law of love with the hands of Angels nor of men, but with Thine own finger.* If a King, to show a favour unto one that he loveth, write unto him with his own hand, how much more ought we to esteem this commandment of love, seeing it hath pleased Thee, O Lord, to write it with Thine own hand. The Apostle St. Paul commended his Epistles that he wrote unto the Churches because he had written them with his own hand; and how much more ought we to esteem this commandment of love, seeing Thou, O Lord, hast written it with Thine own hand? And the more to

* Ecclus. 31.

commend unto us this commandment, Thou hast not only written it Thyself, but didst also prepare and make the tables wherein Thou didst write it. As a father, to encourage his son to learn, trimmeth him up a little book with his own hand, and writeth therein the letters that children use first to learn, even so hast Thou dealt with us, our God and our Father Who art in Heaven, giving us the sweet precept of love written with Thine own hand in tables that Thou Thyself hast made, the more to commend unto us the observation of this pleasant and delectable commandment.

It is a shame for me, and a great shame, that having so many causes to love Thee, and being so bound for so many reasons to give Thee my whole love and desire, that yet so earnestly and carefully Thou commandest me to love Thee. If any man were the same that he ought to be, he needed not this commandment, for that Thy goodness and his own nature, besides infinite benefits for which he is bound to love Thee, would carry him to Thy love. And though all this should cease, yet would the continual need that he hath of Thee carry him unto Thy Divine Majesty, seeing that Thou art the only remedy and true succour in all his defects and necessities. But Thou, O Lord, seeing our appetite corrupted by sin, and our nature evil inclined, commandest us to love Thee, not for Thine own cause, Who hast not need of our love, but for love of us, by that means to do us much good and great favour.

FORTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

THAT GOD COMMANDETH US TO LOVE HIM FOR TO ENRICH US.

WHEREFORE willest Thou, O Lord, and commandest me to love Thee above all things, and givest me a commandment of love, and threatenest me with eternal pain if I love Thee not? Thou lovest Thyself eternally with infinite love, and why hast Thou respect unto the love of a poor man, and so miserable a creature as I am? Wherein were Thy glory increased if Thou wert beloved of all men? The love wherewithal Thou dost infinitely love Thyself increaseth not, neither is it with any other love augmented. The love wherewith Thou lovest man whom Thou hast created, the same love commandeth us to love Thee above all things. Thou desirest, most merciful Lord, that man accompany Thee perpetually in Thy glory, and that he enjoy Thy bliss for ever, and vouchsafest to endow and honour him in this life with many benefits.

Thou, O Lord, art the fountain from whence floweth the perfection of all creatures, and the nearer that a creature approacheth unto Thee, the more perfection he is endowed and enriched withal. Now, because Thou desirest, my God, to participate unto me Thy divine perfections, and to bestow on me Thy heavenly treasures, which whoso will enjoy must of force come unto Thee, and for to come unto Thee it is necessary to love Thee; therefore dost Thou command us that we love Thee above all things. This difference there

is betwixt spiritual and corporal things, that corporal things join themselves and come one to another by motion and corporal steps, but spiritual things join not but by love, insomuch, O Lord, that the more a spiritual creature loveth Thee, so much the nearer he is unto Thee; for as the body moveth with steps, so is the soul moved with affections and desires. It hath pleased Thee, therefore, O Lord, to command me to love Thee, and the cause thereof was for that love is a necessary way whereby a man may come unto Thee, and a means of great importance to be able to receive Thy grace. If fire be so noble a creature that the nearer a man cometh unto it the more it lighteneth him, and the clearer he seeth, and the greater heat he receiveth thereof, how much more shalt Thou do the same, O my God, Who art infinitely more noble and more participant than any other creature, how noble soever it be. Oh, if there were no error and impediments on our parts, how far greater light of understanding and heat of charity should we receive of Thee, O Lord, than they do which go nigh the fire. "Come unto God," saith the Psalmist, "and you shall be enlightened."*

By departing, O my soul, from this heavenly fire, thou becomest so blind, and to walk astray hereof proceedeth all thy coldness and lukewarmness and thy fond love that thou bearest to transitory things. and forgettest those heavenly treasures which continue for ever. God is a fire,† saith the Scripture, and therefore, by coming and walking so nigh unto Him, the two disciples' hearts which went unto Emmaus

* Psalm xxxiii. 6. † Deut. iv. 24.

burned in their breasts.* Approach thou, then, my soul, unto this fire; burn, O Lord, my reins and my heart,† that I may sing with the Prophet,‡ My heart hath been inflamed, and all the inner parts of my soul altered. My heart, O Lord, with Thine absence becometh cold and proud and luke. What effects the absence of the sun worketh upon the earth, the like and the very same are wrought in my heart by wandering from Thee. As the further that the sun departeth from the earth, the more cold increaseth, and the greater darkness groweth, so the further that I depart from Thee, Who art the Sun of Justice and Light of my soul, so much the more increaseth the coldness and lukewarmness of my love and the blinder I remain. When the sun beginneth to set, the shadows of earthly things wax greater, and everything, how little soever it be, casteth a great shadow; but when the sun is at her height and full force, all shadows are but little: even so, O Lord, the further that I am separated from Thee, the greater seem unto me the shadows of things of this life, and the more I set my affection upon them; but when Thou, O Lord, Who art the Sun of my soul, casteth forth Thy beams and that we come nigh unto Thee, all things seem little unto us, and little we set by them.

All things in this life, saith the Scripture, pass away as a shadow,§ and profit them nothing at all that follow them. The difference that is between painted things and very substances, and between a shadow and true existence, the very same is there

* St. Luke xxiv. 32. † Psalm xxv. 2. ‡ Psalm lxxii. 21.
§ Wisdom v. 9.

between the goods of the world and the perfect true goods of Heaven. The figure of this world vanisheth away,* and I have looked upon all things under the sun, and have seen that all was vanity,† and wherefore leavest thou then, my soul, the truth for falsehood, and lovest vanity?‡ These little things seem great unto thee because thou art separated far off from thy God; but draw near unto Him, and thou shalt say with the Apostle, "I esteem all things as dung."§ By the communication that Moses had with Thee on the mount, my God and my Lord, he became of so excellent great brightness, that when he descended the Hebrews were not able to behold his face. Those that are joined unto Thee by love shine bright and are transformed unto Thee, for that they participate of Thy perfections, and Thou impartest unto them Thy great and celestial treasures. O burning love, O flaming charity, whose beams do pierce the high and highest heaven from earth!

Thou knowest, O lover of our souls, thou knowest, O Eternal Wisdom of the Father, that without Thy love we are not able to come unto Thee, and therefore Thou commandest us to love Thee above all things, that man may come unto Thee, whom so dearly Thou lovest, and that he may enjoy Thy grace and divine brightness for the love wherewith Thou lovest us. Thou commandest us to love Thee, and Thou that lovest will be beloved of us, seeking to raise man to this high degree of dignity, even from earth unto Heaven, that the soul of man being

* 1 Cor. vii. 31. † Eccles. i. 14. ‡ Psalm iv. 3.
§ Phil. iii. 8.

exalted above the stars, may dwell in Thy house for ever, and there enjoy perfect bliss and felicity. Thou wilt not, O Lord, give us this or that good, but the chief and greatest good, which far exceedeth all other goods. The way whereby we come unto Thee is the love of Thee above all things; He to Whom we come is Thyself, beloved above all things; and the place where we come is Thyself, infinite above all things. Thou commandest me to love Thee for to give me bliss above all other blisses, that I may be partaker not only of all them that do praise Thee and have kept Thy commandments, but also of Him Whom the morning stars do praise, at Whose beauty the sun and the moon do marvel, and all the children of God rejoice.

Wherefore it is meet, O Lord, that man forsake father and mother to come unto Thee, for that loving Thee above all things, he may become one spirit in love and charity with his God. This most excellent Love, therefore, desirous to bestow most high dignity, honour, and felicity upon men, commandeth Himself to be beloved above all things, as though reasonable man, were it not through the perverseness of his will, could love anything else besides Thee. By Thee was I created, by Thee were all things made subject unto me, and for my service Thou createdst them. By Thee I live, and by Thee Kings do reign, and the mighty do administer justice.* Thou, loving me, dost always command me more than all other things besides, that I may ascend above all things, and be blessed for ever; for notwithstanding this, I should be

* Prov. viii. 15, 16.

compared to brutish beasts, and made like unto them,* and trod under the foot of devils, wicked spirits, and deprived of Thy love. Unto thee, most Almighty God, immeasurable love, and most tender lover of our souls, be praise, glory, benediction, wisdom and thanksgiving, honour and power and strength for ever and ever. Amen.†

Seeing Thou commandest Thy creature to love Thee above all things, to the end Thou mayest give us bliss above all bliss, which art Thyself, most blessed for ever. Oh, how sweet, O Lord, is Thy spirit towards us,‡ seeing Thou gavest us this so sweet a commandment of love, for the chief and first commandment.§ He that observeth the rest of the commandments, distinguisheth one from another, for one may be a murderer and not steal, covetous and not an adulterer, but he that loveth Thee, O Lord, above all things liveth in charity and cannot transgress any commandment. And so falleth it out that in keeping this most sweet commandment he keepeth all the rest of the commandments. What thing more sweet could be commanded us: what thing more pleasant or more holy than to command us to love Thee? Thy holy love is the fountain of all good, and therefore, to give us herewith all other goods by coming unto Thee Thou commandest us to love Thee.

* Psalm xlviii. 13, 21.

† Apoc. vii. 12. ‡ Wisdom xii. 1. § St. Matt. xxii. 38.

FORTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

THAT GOD COMMANDED US TO LOVE BECAUSE HE WOULD HAVE US TO LIVE.

IT is so much my duty, my God and my whole bliss, to love Thee, that there ought no reason to be yielded; therefore what reason is there to cease from loving Thee? What excuse can my soul have to cease loving Thee one moment? What excuse can he make that loveth Thee not? I see before mine eyes Thy infinite goodness, and here present before my face Thine infinite perfections. My heart leapeth within my body with the strokes of the great good that it feeleth, and my soul melteth in the strait prison of this miserable body, desiring to be loosed and to be cast and consumed in this most hot burning fire of love. When will that day come, wherein being set free from the corruption of this body, which presseth me down, my soul may be cast into the glowing furnace of the flames of burning love: that being out of fear and suspicion, never possibly to be quenched, it may be made a flaming firebrand, and love Thee for evermore without end. O grievous stay and painful prolonging! One thing, O Lord, wherein I see how much Thou lovest me, is that Thou commandest me to love Thee. Not for Thyself, O Lord, but for my sake wilt Thou be beloved of me, and for that Thou knowest that in Thy love consisteth all my salvation and my whole life, therefore desirest Thou and seekest my love, to give me life. This is life everlasting, that we know Thee the only true

God, and Whom Thou hast sent, Jesus Christ Thy Son.*

Thou hast put life in love and commanded me to love Thee for to give me life. So saith Thy well-beloved disciple St. John, that he that loveth not abideth in death, and that we are translated from death to life because we love.† Thou wouldst, O Lord, that we live, and therefore commandest us to love. When we love the world we undo ourselves and defile us with many sins; we are vexed with a thousand cares and wearied with great miseries, because we have not settled our love where we ought to have done, and then we enjoy the greatest peace and quietness of mind when we love the chiefest good, which is God. Yea, and then only we live when we love. I hold it not, O Lord, for a hard matter, that Thou shouldst command me to eat when I am hungry nor to provide what is necessary for my body, and wherefore then should I think it sharp or rigorous that Thou commandest me to seek Thy holy love, being so needful for my soul. The body liveth with food and the soul with Thy holy love, for he that loveth not, liveth not. If love be the life of the soul, then ought I as much procure to love Thee as mine own life. The life of the body is the soul and the life of the soul is love, and as the body which hath a soul hath in it life and natural heat, so the soul with this Thy holy love hath in it the heat of charity, and worketh works of charity: and waxeth cold, and proud, and stark dead, without doing any actions or operations of life, when it is deprived of this Thy holy love. What else dost Thou when Thou

* St. John xvii. 3. † 1 St. John iii. 14.

commandest me to love Thee but command me to live? When the doctor of the law demanded of Thee what he should do to obtain life everlasting, Thou answerest him, O Lord, that he should love God with all his heart, according as it is written in the law,* for because love is life, Thou commandest him to love who desired to know how to live. He who will enjoy life in this life, and a life hereafter to live for ever, let him love God and he shall live a true and perfect life. It was said unto a sinner in the Apocalypse, who seemed alive and yet was dead in deed, "Thou hast the name that thou livest and thou art dead."† Thou calledst, O Lord, Thy Prophet Ezechiel, and carrying him into a great large field, full of dry bones, Thou commandedst him that he should prophesy, and say Thou wouldst send souls into those old and dry bones and that they should live.‡

O wonderful promise, which giveth so great respect unto obstinate sinners, waxen old in wickedness! that they may trust in Thy infinite goodness and mercy, seeing that after so long expectation and hope of mercy, Thou givest them the true life of grace and charity, by inflaming our souls with Thy heavenly love. And for that love is the bond of perfection, for all Christian perfection consisteth in loving Thee, and is the link wherewithal one thing is tied to another, and things are joined and coupled together: these dry bones begin to join together, one with another, although they were dispersed and scattered in divers parts of the field, and forthwith there appeared a great and mighty host of armed men.

* St. Luke x. 27. † Apoc. iii. 1. ‡ Ezech. xxxvii. 5.

Love maketh the heart wherein it hath place so strong and terrible, that so soon as Thy holy love was entered into those dead bodies, they had not only life, but seemed also valiant and armed men. St. Luke writeth of the holy primitive Church, that the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one will,* although they were many in number, yet love joined them in such sort that they were all but one in will, and because they burned in Thy holy love they became so fearful to their enemies, that the Scripture saith, speaking of The holy Church, "What see ye in the Sulamitess but troops of armed soldiers?"† She was terrible to her adversaries and dreadful to her enemies, even as an enemy with squadrons well placed in battle array,‡ and hereupon, although few in number and of small force in the sight of the world, they have conquered the world, overcome the princes of the earth, and made all persons subject to the faith.

Thy Apostle being full of this heavenly love, biddeth battle to all the mischiefs of the world, saying in an Epistle that he wrote unto the Romans, "What shall separate us from the charity of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or persecution, or the sword?" "I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, neither things present, nor things to come, neither might, nor height, nor depth, nor other creature, shall be able to separate us from the charity of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord."‖

* Acts iv. 32. † Cant. vii. 1. ‡ Cant. vi. 3.
‖ Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39.

Those men who love God are alive, and mighty to set upon and overcome their enemies, and so strong that by no means of human force they can be vanquished. This virtue and force proceedeth from love, which is the life of our soul; he that hath charity possesseth God and overcometh all things. St. John says, "God is charity, and he that is in charity is with God, and God is with him."* Our body is maintained and liveth with meat and bodily food; these of necessity must be consumed and perish, that the body may be nourished. The birds of the air and beasts of the earth and fishes of the sea must die and lose their life, that the body of man may not die but have life. Our body liveth by the death of many beasts, insomuch that other creatures must lose their life to preserve our life, and in like manner, O merciful Lord, as it hath pleased Thee that many things should die to preserve the life of my body, so hast Thou vouchsafed also that He should die Who is the food of my soul, that the same might live by His death.

Hereupon, my Redeemer, Thou being that infinite charity and self-same love which is the food of my soul, Thou vouchsafest to die that my soul might live. Thy death is my life, and dying Thou becamest food of life for my soul, which could not live but by Thy death. The death of other living creatures is the life of my body, and Thy death, most sacred Redeemer, is the life of Thy soul. The Holy Ghost saith, "It is expedient that one man die for the people, that the whole nation perish not."† It pleased Thee so much to exalt our souls at their first creation, that whereas

* 1 St. John iv. 16. † St. John xi. 50.

Thou providedst a competent food for all other creatures, every one in his kind and according to his nature, Thou Thyself wouldst become the food of my soul, and Thy holy love its only life and sustenance. And as the venison that is chased and wearied with hunting is most tender and pleasant to the taste, so, after Thou hadst made Thyself the food of my soul, Thou toilest and weariedst Thyself, and being wearied, sattest down upon the fountain of Sichar, when the woman of Samaria came unto Thee, that by this means Thou mightest be the more pleasant unto the taste of my soul.

What tongue, O Lord, is able to express how much we owe unto Thee, and how much Thou hast done to exalt man, now as when my heart was cold in Thy love, and that the rudeness of my nature could not attain to the understanding of the infinite benefits received of Thy bountiful hands, by means whereof I might love so noble a Benefactor, it hath pleased Thee to place the life of my soul in love, that by this means, if it would, it might be enforced to Thee with the natural desire that every one hath to love and preserve his own life as much as in him is possible. And seeing it is as natural for me to love Thee as to live, I yield Thee, O Lord, a thousand millions of thanks for the favours that Thou hast showed me, commanding me to love Thee, seeing Thou commandest me nothing else but that I live, which is the thing I most desire and do naturally covet and procure.

FORTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

HOW THE LOVE OF GOD IS THE LIFE OF OUR SOULS.

GREATLY I am bound to love Thee, O Lord, seeing that Thy holy love is my life. Of all things that men love, nothing is so dear unto them as their life. For preservation thereof the sick man taketh potions, and is content to be let blood, and suffereth, if it be needful, any member of his body to be cut off not to lose his life. A man would suffer any pain and labour, be it never so great, for to live, although this life which men love so much cannot properly be called life, but the image of life or shadow of death; wherefore the Apostle calleth the Colossians dead.* The life only which the just live in Thy holy love, in Scripture is called life, and the life of sinners death. This corporal life is nothing else but for a man to have within him a soul which giveth force unto the body, by means whereof we feel, hear, see, and work other operations and effects of life.

Now, as the life of the body consisteth of having within it a soul, whereby the body is governed, feeleth, and walketh, so consisteth the life of the soul by having within it another spirit, which art Thou, my God, by virtue whereof my soul liveth, and I moved to work the works of life and grace meritorious to life everlasting. Whereupon, O Lord, Thy holy Apostle, speaking of the life that Thou givest to our souls by Thy Divine presence, saith that in Thee we live and

* Colos. iii. 3.

move and be.* Thou art life, and with Thy presence our soul liveth, as with Thine absence she dieth. Martha said that if Thou hadst been present her brother Lazarus had not died.† As in Thy bodily absence Lazarus died in body and was raised again to life by Thy presence, so Thy spiritual absence causeth the death of my soul, and Thy heavenly presence giveth to us the life of grace; and as the presence of the soul giveth heat unto the body, by which natural heat it liveth, in like manner Thy presence, which is the life of the soul, giveth it a kind of heat, which is charity and love, which the soul possesseth when Thou art within her.

If, therefore, thou wilt know, my soul, whether thou be dead or alive, look whether thou love thy God or no; "He that loveth not abideth in death."‡ As thou desirest to live, so oughtest thou to love Thy God, for He is the way, the truth, and life. Seek therefore, my soul, the true love, and change this earthly affection for that celestial and divine love of thy Spouse, Jesus Christ, seeing that in these temporal things there is no true nor steadfast love where thy taste feeleth not the pleasantness and sweetness of her Creator. Thy life consisteth not in learning, nor in wisdom, nor in possession of great wealth, nor in high estate of honour, but only in loving of thy God. Wouldst thou then have life? There is nothing surely in this world more dear, for which, as the Scripture saith, a man would give all that he hath. If, then, I love so dearly the life of the body, which consisteth in having in it a soul, much more ought I to love the life of the soul,

* Acts xvii. 28. † St. John xi. 43. ‡ 1 St. John iii. 14.

seeing that the presence thereof is cause of the life of my body, which I so much esteem.

The cause is better than the effect, and if the cause of the life of the body be the soul, the life of the soul must needs be better than that of the body. I ought, therefore, to love Thee, my God and my Lord, above all things for giving life to my soul, for if this have not life I shall in body die for ever, but if she live I shall remain with Thee in everlasting rest in Heaven. And if I love so much this temporal life, a great deal more ought I to love the life of the soul, seeing that by the life thereof I make the life of the body everlasting. Oh, how much more oughtest thou, my soul, to labour for to enjoy that true, eternal, and blessed life. This here is transitory, and that everlasting; this inconstant, that stable and permanent; this changeable, that firm and immoveable; this subject to toils and miseries, that exempt from all grief and corruption; this enthralled and beset with many infirmities and troubles, that free from all calamity and adverse fortunes; this is no life, but a prolonged death, and a shadow of life; this is the true life, wherein men are in security from dread of death, enjoying Christ in His glory. And if this life then, O Lord, be so much beloved, wherefore is not that esteemed? If I so much desire this, wherefore die I not for the true life? Wherefore labour I not somewhat to obtain that which in very deed, and according to the propriety of the word, is called life? When that young man came unto Thee, and demanded Thee what he should do to obtain life everlasting, Thou answeredst him saying, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the command-

ments."* Thou saidst not unto him, "If thou wilt enter into everlasting life," according as he demanded Thee, but, "If thou wilt enter into life," for that this word life absolutely, without any addition of eternal, is not to be understood of this present life, but of life everlasting. And how then shall I obtain this life? Marry, by giving unto my soul the life of love; for as hell is the sepulchre of the dead, so is Heaven the house of habitation of the living, according to that saying of the Psalm, "Thou art my God, and my portion shall be in the land of the living."†

Live thou, therefore, my soul, the life of love, if thou wilt live in Heaven for ever; and if thou live not, but liest dead, hear what the true Life Itself saith unto thee, "I am the resurrection and life:"‡ resurrection for sinners and life for the just. Of sinners raised from the death of sin to the life of heavenly love, St. John says, "We are translated from death to life, because we love."§ Thou seest plainly that love raiseth the dead and giveth life, and he that wanteth this love, although he live in this world, yet do God and His Angels count him for dead, and the devils do nothing else but provide for his burial and in what place of hell to lodge him when death shall be his food. A man that we see his wrists leave beating, remaining cold, we hold for dead; so the devils, when they see a man's spiritual pulses and motions cease working, and that his natural heat of love faileth whereunto by nature he is inclined, they account him for dead, knowing that he wanteth the life of love. What man

* St. Matt. xix. 17. † Psalm cxli. 6. ‡ St. John xi. 25.
§ 1 St. John iii. 14.

is he, then, that desireth life? All men would live, and every one desireth life, and because Thou desirest, O Lord, that every one should live, Thou commandest us all to love, and hast placed life in love that we might live without labour, love being as it is very pleasant and delectable.

I see many, O Lord, in the world that are living by the sweat of their brows, and travel both by sea and land to get their living, and all their travails they esteem well employed when they gain thereby food to maintain their life. O our Creator, how good and gracious art Thou in the commandments that Thou willest us to keep, seeing Thou mightest have laid upon us hard and severe precepts, and have caused us with greater labour and travail to purchase the life of our soul, seeing that with so great toil and pains we gain and earn food to maintain the life of our body; but Thou hast dealt more mercifully and bountifully with us, in giving us freely the life of our soul, and that we might obtain it with pleasure and delight, commanding us that we should live. O sweet precept and excellent commandment, full of all delight and pleasure, seeing that although Thou wilt have us, O Lord, by labour and travail, to gain food for our body, and yet wilt not that we purchase life for our soul, but by love, ease, and pleasure.

FORTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

THAT GOD COMMANDETH US TO LOVE HIM FOR TO GIVE US A QUIET LIFE.

IT is the proper effect of love to make bitter things sweet, and sweet and pleasant things painful and uneasy. Thou knowing, therefore, O Lord, the toil and travail of this our life, and to how many miseries the sin of Adam hath brought us, commandest us to love to unburthen us of the heavy weight and griefs that we suffer. He that loveth his superior doth all that ever he commandeth him with delight; but he that abhorreth or hateth him doth all things overthwartly. Thou wouldst not have us, O Lord, to take pains in observing Thy commandments, but that in keeping them we might lead here a pleasant life, and merit, by observing them, life everlasting; and to the end that the accomplishment of the other commandments might be no heavy burthen unto us, Thou gavest unto us, O Lord, the commandment of Thy divine love, that by keeping this commandment we might likewise perform the other with delight and pleasure.

Love maketh labours and travails sweet; and seeing that our life is of itself painful, Thou wouldst have us, O Lord, thereby to make it easy. Thou hast given delight to our life through love, for by loving, all griefs and vexations are turned into pleasure and sweet delight, insomuch, O Lord, that for to ease and recreate us, and to exempt us from the laboursome toils that are annexed to the banishment that here we

lead, Thou hast given us the commandment of love. Through this commandment of love all the rest of the commandments are pleasant, for nothing seemeth difficult to love, but everything converted into a pleasant sweetness. Hereupon Thou sayest by Thy holy Evangelist, that Thy yoke is sweet and Thy burthen light. How can it be a burthen and light? In that it is a burthen it must needs be heavy, and in that it is a yoke it must needs of force be sharp. The burthen of sins is so heavy that it consumeth the life both of body and soul, and the weight thereof is so great that it presseth one down to the pit of hell. Eleven heavens were not able to sustain and bear up the weight of sin, and therefore the Angels sinning did presently fall from the highest and uppermost heaven, and never stayed till they came to the centre of the earth and lowest part thereof. They descended and fell down with such violent swiftness that Thou sayest, O Lord, in Thy Gospel that Thou sawest Satan fall from Heaven as a flash of lightning.* Sin was that weight of lead which the Prophet saith that they put upon a woman's mouth,† for sin is a weight which falleth upon the wickedness of the heart and malice of one's own will, and carrieth it headlong to the pit of hell.

This is that burthen, O Lord, that Thou comest to lighten our shoulders of, laying upon us the burthen of Thy holy love. Thou wilt not have us go empty, but taking away one burthen, layest another upon us, and delivering us from the burthen of the world, chargest us with the debt of the duty, wherein we

* St. Luke x. 18. † Zach. v. 8.

stand bound to serve for the favour we receive at Thy hand when Thou disburthenest us of the heavy burthen of sins. This burthen of Thine is sweet and light, and so far from being heavy that it helpeth one to go that beareth it, and setteth him free from all weight and heaviness. The greater burthen one beareth on his shoulders, the greater force and strength he receiveth that beareth it. When just men are most heavy laden, and do most exercise themselves in keeping Thy holy commandments, then go they most swift and fresh. They run, saith the Scripture, and took no pains, they went and were not weary. O yoke of holy love, how sweetly dost thou bind, how favourably dost thou lead, how pleasantly dost thou weigh down, and how gently dost thou scourge us! The yoke wringeth not the necks of the oxen that draw in it, because the ploughman fasteneth under the yoke a soft bolster made of wool or cotton. Even so, O Lord, did Thy Saints sustain and bear the burthen and sharpness of penance, and the burthen of fastings, injuries and haircloth, and all this with delight and pleasure, without wringing or repining at those things which unto worldlings seem painful, and the reason hereof is because Thou, O Lord, with Thy clemency and infinite mercy, under the yoke of the travails of their life, puttest on the necks of Thy beloved friends the sweetness of Thy holy love and the pleasantness of Thy spiritual consolations, which Thou sendest inwardly to such as are Thine.

Through these spiritual favours and true delights of the soul which the world attaineth not unto nor enjoyeth not, good men do cheerfully carry the

burthen, whereas the wicked are galled, scourged, and tormented with the burthens of the world, according to their own saying, "We go weary in the way of wickedness;"* for inasmuch as they bear the yoke and burthen of the travails of this life without the soft bolster of Thy holy love, it is no marvel that they go painfully and with great toil in the service of the world. But, contrariwise, Thy holy Apostle St. Paul, as one who in all his tribulations was wonderfully visited with Thy divine bounty, bearing with delight the burthen of his travails, said unto the Corinthians: "Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all mercies, and God of all comfort, Who comforteth us in all our tribulations, for as the Passion of Christ abound in us, so also by Christ doth our comfort abound."†

Marvel not if we carry the yoke of our Lord so stoutly and cheerfully, for we are full within of spiritual consolations, for which cause we fail not, for although our man without, which is sensuality, corrupt, yet that which is within us is renewed from day to day. Intolerable were the travails of this life, and very hardly could the burthen be borne and the grief thereof suffered, were they not accompanied with Thy divine love. The yoke of Thy love were very heavy, if love did not fasten it to our necks; this love is that which maketh a good life of an evil, and an easy life of that which is painful. Thy commandments are pleasant to the good who love Thee, and insupportable to the wicked that receive Thee without love.

* Wisdom v. 7. † 2 Cor. i. 3-5.

Thy holy Apostle boldly presumeth to bid defiance unto all torments and evils whatsoever, and doubteth not to vanquish and overcome them, having Thy divine love only on his side, and after his defiance and small account of all tribulations and travails of this world, he concludeth, saying, "For we are killed for Thy sake all the day, but in all these things we overcome because of Him that loveth us, we suffer pain and travail even unto death for love of Thee." And hereupon is Thy holy love compared to the wheels of a cart, for although they be a burthen and a weight, yet goeth the cart more swiftly with them than without them. In like wise, although the wings of a bird be some weight and burthen, yet are they to the bird a cause of her swift flying. In like manner, my God and my Lord, this Thy commandment of love is of that quality that by virtue thereof all Thy love, and all the burden of Thy commandments is easily and swiftly moved. Wherefore, when Thou sayest that Thy yoke is sweet, it is to be understood, unto them that love Thee, and when Thou sayest that the way to Heaven is narrow and painful,* it is meant that it is unto those that love Thee not.

All is easy and pleasant unto him that loveth, and all is painful and loathsome unto him that loveth not; and therefore, O Lord, for to give us a happy life Thou wouldst have us to love Thee.

When Thou commandest, O Lord, that we should love Thee, Thou dost nothing else but procure and hire us a life of delight without all pains, even in the midst of the miseries of this world. Whoso is

* St. Matt. vii. 14.

imperfect, with his great commodity that herein we see, let him go to Thy holy love, if he desire here in this world to lead a pleasant and quiet life.

FORTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

HOW THE LOVE OF GOD MAKETH ALL THINGS SWEET.

HE that loveth doth all things pleasantly, for with a true lover nothing is painful, and how much soever he do, and that with all diligence possible, yet doth he always desire to do a great deal more. If thou lovedst, O my soul, thy God and thy Lord in good earnest, and as His divine majesty deserveth to be beloved, thou wouldst never be disquieted nor troubled in mind, neither would any of these things seem painful unto Thee which now do molest and weary thee. Thou art sad, pensive, and discontented because the love of God hath not taken root, nor is settled in thee: the love of thy Spouse Jesus Christ maketh all bitter things sweet. We read in the Holy Scripture that whereas one had put into the pot wherein the children of Israel should eat certain wild bitter herbs that were stark poison, that the Prophet Eliseus, putting meal into the said pot, it presently became of good and wholesome taste, and void of all matter of bitterness.* If injuries do trouble thee, if adversities and tribulations seem bitter unto thee, put into the pot of thy heart a little flour

* 4 Kings iv. 41.

of the love of God, and all this bitterness shall be converted into sweetness. When thou complainest of hurts and damages received, or of the ingratitude of men towards thee, thou confessest with thine own mouth that thou lovest not God. Thou givest witness, my soul, against thyself that thou lovest not thy God and thy Lord.

O my Redeemer and Spouse of my soul, what a sweet and pleasant life might I lead if I would Amidst all the troubles and vexations of this mortal life, if I loved Thy divine majesty, my God, earnestly and perfectly in the midst of flaming furnaces and fires of persecutions and tribulations, I should be as it were in Paradise. The holy children in the midst of the flames of fire of Babylon, being persecuted and condemned to death, standing whole and sound, did praise and bless Thee,* because within their hearts burned the fire of divine love. Daniel sat sure and safe among the greedy and hungry lions,† and Jonas in the whale's belly glorified Thee with devout prayers.‡ O Lord, how exceedingly are Thy friends honoured, and in what security do they walk who love Thee, and with how great contentation and contentment do all those live who serve Thee. Those only are they who are to be envied, and these are they only that here in this life enjoy life, for all others are wretched, miserable, and most unhappy.

"Wherefore art thou sad my soul, and wherefore dost thou trouble me?"§ Love thy God and thou shalt be merry and quiet. If squadrons of armed soldiers

* Dan. iii. 51—90. † Dan. vi. 16—23. ‡ Jonas ii. 2.
§ Psalm xlii. 5.

should set themselves against me, my soul shall not be afraid. If a whole host should rise up against me, in my God will I hope.* Give me, O Lord, Thy holy love, and cast me if it please Thee into hell fire, for even there will I be content and merry. This love let me have within my heart, and let hell itself and all the world rise up against me. Who punisheth me? I punish myself. Who persecuteth me? I persecute myself. These vexations that thou sufferest, my soul, and these complaints that thou makest, and all these things that so much do grieve thee, cry out and say that thou lovest not thy God, Whom if thou lovedst truly, thou shouldst lead a quiet and pleasant life, for everything that doth now torment and vex thee should give thee exceeding great consolation. The waters of Mara were bitter, and so much that the children of Israel were not able to drink them for bitterness, but Moses casting a piece of wood into them they presently became sweet.† The waters also of Jericho were salt and unsavoury, whereof the inhabitants of that country complaining unto Eliseus, the Prophet cast into them a little salt and they became fresh.‡ And wherefore, then, shall not Thy divine love work the like effects in our souls, and a great deal more.

The holy love of Jesus Christ converteth into delight and pleasantness all that is sharp and bitter in this life. Fire giveth a good taste unto meats. Love is a fire, and like fire giveth a pleasant taste unto all meats. The Holy Scripture saith that Jacob loved Rachel exceedingly, and for love of her served

* Psalm xxvi. 1, 3. † Exodus xv. 23.
‡ 4 Kings ii. 21.

Laban many years, all which seemed unto Jacob but a few days, for the great love that he bore unto Rachel. Behold how years seem but days unto one that loveth, and of much he maketh account as little. If he had not loved, those seven years would have seemed unto him seventy ages, but because he loved, he thought those seven years but seven days. If the love that he bore unto a woman could work such a wonderful effect, how much better, O my Lord, shall Thy divine and holy love work the like. If we loved Thee, all our seven years would seem but little, and we should account as nothing all the travail and pain that we sustain for love of Thee. If we find any difficulty and hardness in Thy holy love, and if it disquiet and torment us to endure griefs and labours for love of Thee, it is in very deed because we love Thee not. Unto him that loveth, many commandments seem but one, whereas, contrariwise to him that loveth not, one commandment seemeth many.

This is very well verified in our mother Eve, who said unto the serpent, that Thou, O Lord, hadst commanded her that she should not eat of the tree of knowledge, no, nor so much as touch it. Thou didst not command her that she should not touch the tree, but only that she should not eat,* but, because she loved not, one commandment seemed two. But, contrariwise, Thy servant David who loved Thee, calleth six hundred laws and more, that Thou hadst given to the people of Israel, but one law, when he saith in the Psalm, "How, O Lord, have I loved Thy law, all the day long will I meditate upon it."† And speaking of great numbers

* Gen. iii. 3. † Psalm cxviii. 97.

of commandments, saith, "Thy commandment is very much extended."*

This, Thy only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, gave us to understand, when speaking of this commandment, and of those who loved Him, He said unto His disciples, "If any man love Me he keepeth My commandment,"† and speaking of those who love Him not, He added forthwith, "And he that loveth Me not, keepeth not My commandments." By these two sayings and sentences of our Redeemer, we may see how, to those that love Thee the law of God is but one precept, and to such as love not, it is many commandments, and therefore, of the first he speaketh in the singular number, but of the second, who love Thee not, in the plural number. Thy holy love is of that quality, that it maketh many things one, that which is hard and difficult it maketh easy, the severe and sharp it maketh sweet, and bitter things of pleasant taste and savour. As the berries of Mandragora make a man who smelleth or eateth of them to feel no pain, although one should cut off any limb of his body, so Thy divine love causeth a man to feel no grief nor travail in this life, according to that saying of the Proverbs, "They wounded me and I had no pain, they scourged me and I felt no grief."‡ For this cause, O Lord, Thou gavest unto many of Thy holy martyrs this, Thy divine love, that thereby they might not feel so much grief from their cruel torments. They had, not only as Thy friends, Thy essential love, which is Thy grace and charity, whereof they were full, but Thou distilledst into them a sensible love and

* Psalm cxviii. 96. † St. John xiv. 23, 24. ‡ Prov. xxiii. 35.

spiritual comfort, by which special favour and help a great part of their pains were lightened.

This divine love putteth a facility and pleasantness in all the painful works of our body, and if thou wouldst know, my soul, how much thou livest without the love of God, the pain and difficulty wherewith thou exercisest the works of virtue is a sufficient argument. What difficulty can there be where love is? What thing can there be severe where the sweetness of love is? What thing can be sharp or fearful where the buckler of love is, and the delectable taste thereof? Love thou therefore, my soul, love entirely thy God and Lord, and thou shalt lead, here on earth, a joyful and pleasant life, and shalt hereafter enjoy a glorious and everlasting life in Heaven with thy beloved.

FORTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

THAT GOD COMMANDETH US TO LOVE HIM FOR TO HONOUR US.

LOVE selleth the lover for the beloved, insomuch that our soul is more in her acts than in her powers, and more where she loveth than where she liveth. When I love the world, I give my soul for the world, and therefore sayest Thou, O Lord, in Thy Gospel, that where my treasure is, there is my heart also.* In loving, therefore, these temporal riches and goods of the earth, I give my heart, which is of great price and value, for the dung and dust of the earth. I am like a child without judgment, who giveth a precious ruby for an apple, seeing I sell my soul for earthly dross, exchanging this precious pearl and excellent margarite for the vanity and the corruption of the flesh. So saith the Holy Scripture, speaking of King Achab and certain wicked Israelites, who confederated themselves with the Gentiles, and made a league and covenant with them, that they sold themselves to work evil. This also bewailed the Prophet Baruch,† when he said of certain wicked Hebrews, that they had sold themselves to the Gentiles.

It is a wonderful great blindness, that a man who hath the use of reason and is endowed with judgment, should give such a precious thing as is his soul, created to Thy image and likeness, and sell it for the vile and filthy things of the world, wherefore the Prophet Isaias

* St. Matt. vi. 21. † Baruch iv. 6.

said,* "Who is blind but he who selleth himself?" and therefore, Thou, O Lord, seeing how through our own blindness we are deceived, and how we are bought and sold in the world, to break off this bargain and sale, and to bring us out of the ignorance wherein we live, commandest us to love Thee, for by loving Thy Divine Majesty we give the good for the better, the creature for the Creator, the soul for God, and this precious stone for Him Who exceedeth all value. All that ever is, is either the Creator or the creature, so that whatsoever is not God was made by Him. Love is like the fire, which continually burneth if it have matter to work upon, and so our will cannot be idle, but always occupied in loving one thing or other, and therefore needs must it love either the Creator or the creature. When our soul loveth any earthly creature, it loveth a thing of less value than itself, for that the soul is more noble, and therefore Thou commandest us, O Lord, to love Thee, thereby to honour us and to give us the better in this exchange and sale, when we sell ourselves for Thee, Who art of price and value inestimable.

To certain sinners who, forsaking Thee, the Fountain of lively waters, and digged pits and holes, the Prophet Isaias saith,† "You have sold yourselves for nought." Great reason hath he to say he selleth himself for nought which giveth himself for the dregs of the world. But Thou, most merciful Lord, taking pity and compassion upon us, commandest us to love Thee, that thereby we might do good to ourselves. Thou desirest to honour us, and wouldst have us make great

* Isaias xlii. 19. † Isaias lii. 3.

account of ourselves, and consider well what we are, seeing Thou hast made us to Thy own image and likeness, and therefore wouldst not have us to give ourselves for anything but that which is more worth than ourselves; and this do we by loving, for by this means the creature is transformed into the Creator, and fully restored unto Him that made it of nothing. This is the force of love, that we ought to be such as that is which we love, and, therefore, in loving the earth we make ourselves earthly, and in placing our love in Heaven we are made divine and heavenly.

Nabuchodonosor,* through his inordinate love, became a beast, and went feeding upon the grass of the field; and the Apostle saith, that there are many who have "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the similitude of the image of a corruptible man, and of souls and of four-footed beasts and serpents;"† and therefore, not to make my soul monstrous with such-like deformed shapes, but to beautify that figure of the Heavenly King which was given her at her first creation, I will love Thee, my God and my glory, that I may sing with the most holy Virgin and Mother—"My soul doth magnify our Lord."‡ No man can rightly say "my soul" but he only that hath his soul free from all servitude of sin. He that loveth the world more than himself hath not his soul within himself, but roaming in the world; and he alone may rightly say that his soul is his own who hath it in his own power and liberty, and from whom it is not separated and yielded over unto vices and sin.

* Daniel iv. 30. † Rom. i. 23.
‡ St. Luke i. 46.

The man mentioned in the Gospel when he found the treasure hidden in the field went and sold all that he had and bought that field.* All find not this treasure because all know Thee not; for many infidels live and die in the darkness of their infidelity, and being found by faith as the Christian findeth Thee, yet all men have not fortune to buy this field and to possess and enjoy Thee, for the price thereof is the will which is given by love, and this is not our own when we love earthly things more than ourselves. In renouncing worldly things and detesting sins, we find ourselves; whereas, being entangled with those things by disordinate love, we were not our own. He went and sold all that he had and bought the field; he went out of himself; he went and denied himself, and that which he gained thereby was that he found himself by renouncing the world; and after that he had recovered again his own will, and saw himself lord and master of his own soul, he sold all, giving unto Thee, my God, by love and loving Thee above all things, and yet remained rich, possessing and enjoying Thee, for none can possess Thee but those that love Thee. Neither gavest Thou Thyself to me for any price, but for love, a marvellous merchandize and strange kind of buying and selling, where man is sold and God is bought. Man giveth his own will for to gain God, by loving of Whom above all things and more than himself he denieth himself, and now liveth not to himself, but liveth in God, according to that saying of the Apostle, "I live; not now I, but Christ liveth in me."†

* St. Matt. xiii. 44. † Gal. ii. 20.

Arise up, therefore, now my soul, enter into thyself, and behold whose thou art. Make diligent search, and rigorously with all care examine whose thou art, for unto him thou belongest whom thou lovest. Be not servant of the world, captive of the flesh, nor slave of the devil, seeing that thy Spouse, Jesus Christ, hath loved thee dearly, hath put Himself on the Cross, and yielded Himself to death for to receive thee for His spouse. "Untie the bonds of thy neck, thou captive daughter of Sion;"* recover thy former health and liberty, and break off in earnest with the world, for thy God accepteth only free and voluntary service. Whether is it a more honourable estate for thee to be the servant and bondslave of vanity, or to serve thy God, Whom to serve is to reign? O my God and my Lord, how much am I bound unto Thee, seeing Thou commandest me to love Thee: seeing also that herein Thou pretendest not Thine own profit and commodity, but my good and my honour; that breaking of this fraudulent contract and bargain which I have made with the world, I might love Thee only, and yield myself wholly unto Thee by love, and so by this means might be transformed into Thee, and of a natural and earthly man become a divine and heavenly creature. For such a one ought I to be as He is upon Whom I have placed my love.

* Isaias lii. 2.

FIFTIETH MEDITATION.

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE COMMANDMENT OF THE LOVE OF GOD.

ESTEEM not, therefore, O my soul, a matter of such difficulty to keep this commandment of the love of God, above all things as the letter seemeth outwardly to sound: for as it is an affirmative precept which bindeth not at all times, but only when occasion is offered and need shall require; so although it were a most holy thing and very commendable actually always to love God, yet will not our most merciful Lord command thee this, but only that thou love Him when reason requireth and bindeth thee. Then, therefore, O Lord, we shall be bound to love Thy Divine Majesty above all things, when having any occasion offered to offend thee, we choose rather to lose any good how great soever than to commit any sin, or when being tempted or allured to sin by the enemy of my soul, I choose rather to discontent them and to lose any temporal good than to offend Thee, my Lord and my God. Then do I truly and perfectly love Thee more than all other things, and in the meantime, till such like occasion be offered, I am bound always and at all times to have a preparation of mind, which is a determinate and resolute mind never to offend Him. And touching this part, for that it is a precept negative, it bindeth at all times, and therefore we are bound at all times never to offend God.

And hereupon it followeth manifestly that this precept is partly affirmative and partly negative.

Affirmative in that it requireth us to love God and to serve Him truly and unfeignedly at all times and in all places, with all our power internal and external. And it is negative, for that whereas it demandeth the whole heart and the whole soul for to love Him, it then commandeth us also that with the same we love and serve no other god; and therefore, although the Saints do keep and accomplish this commandment far better than we do, for as in part we know, so in part we love, yet followeth it not for all that that we keep not this divine commandment at all as we are bound, and as our Lord God commandeth us, insomuch as to offend Him we love not any other thing more than Himself, yea, although we employ ourselves in His service not very fervently, and although we love other things and think on other things, yea, and though our service be done with contradiction of sensuality. Wherefore it is likewise to be noted that our Lord and God doth not bind us to love Him with greater intention and affection than other worldly things, but only that we love Him with more account and greater estimation, more esteeming of His friendship than of the love of creatures.

Thou mayest lawfully love anything that thou hast, and be sorry for the loss of it, and yet not go contrary to this commandment. The subject loveth his Prince and King, and maketh great account of his love; and he loveth withal his neighbour with whom he converseth and hath familiarity. He that in this wise loveth his Prince and his neighbour and his brother, loveth his neighbour with greater affection than the King, and so the death of his neighbour

grieveth him more than the death of the King, and yet loveth he the King with more account and estimation, for that he esteemeth more of the love of the King, and in case of necessity would rather choose to offend his neighbour and to purchase his displeasure than to lose the grace and favour of the King. God doth not command us to love Him with more earnestness and affection than other creatures, but He would only have us to love Him with greater account in esteeming and setting by His love more than the love of any other. He that so much esteemeth the love of God that he had rather lose any earthly love than offend God, or to be deprived of His holy love, such a one loveth God above all things, although he love other things with great fervour and affection; yea, and although he love them with greater endeavour and force of the will.

This only God requireth at our hands, that we more esteem His divine love than all other love, insomuch that the love of God ought to be preferred before all other love; so that this be observed, thou mayest love other things, thou mayest lament and bewail their loss very dolefully, without breach of the commandment of love.* Verily, He requireth very little at our hands that hath given us so much, verily thou art inexcusable, O man, that lovest not Him Who is infinite goodness and beauty, and Who setteth so much by thee, that when He gave thee the commandment of His love He straitened not the way of thy salvation, but rather enlarged it and made it wider. It is the property of love to seek and procure for the

* Rom. viii. 35.

beloved all that ever he hath need of; such is the love that thou bearest us, O my God and Lord, seeing that it giveth us so large a scope and liberty to love other things, for he loveth God with all his heart, and above all things, who keepeth His commandments, and doth nothing that is contrary to His divine love. Whereupon the Holy Scripture saith of King Josias: "There was none like unto him that so turned unto God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his strength, according to the words of Moses."* Because he kept and fulfilled all the commandments, it is said that he turned to God with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his strength. He loveth thee, O Lord our God, with all his heart, that will not do anything that Thou hast forbidden, and preferreth Thy holy love before any other love. So did the chaste and devout Susanna, who esteemed more of Thy holy love than of sensual and carnal appetite;† she held it better to fall into the hatred and displeasure of men than to go contrary to the commandment of Thy holy love. The like choice was given to virtuous Joseph in Egypt, who chose rather the persecution that he suffered than to offend Thee.‡ Holy Moses, as saith the Apostle,§ chose rather ignominy and reproach with the people of God, than pleasures and delights in the Court of Pharao. Whereupon the Psalmist saith, "I have chosen rather to be despised in the house of my God than to dwell among sinners."‖ Thy holy love must swim like oil above all other liquors, and ought to be more esteemed than all other things. This

* 4 Kings xxiii. 25. † Dan. xiii. ‡ Gen. xxxix.
§ Heb. xi. 25. ‖ Psalm lxxxiii. 11.

precept of love we accomplish when keeping Thy commandments. As Thy law bindeth us we offend Thee not but sinfully, although otherwise we love many things besides. To love Thee, our God, above all things, is to have our heart so given over and addicted to Thy Divine Majesty that we would rather choose to suffer a thousand deaths than to sever it from Thy love. In this wise did Thy holy Apostle love Thee, who saith: "Who then shall sever us from the charity of Christ—tribulation, or distress, or travails of this world? I know that neither death nor life shall be able to separate me from the love of Jesus Christ."*

It is very little surely, O my soul, that this merciful Lord demandeth at thy hands, seeing that He giveth thee so large a scope to love such things as thou wilt, and requireth of thee nothing else but that thou offend Him for none of them; and then love them as much as thou wilt. Admit not into thy will or understanding anything that is contrary to the will of God. When Sara saw that Ismael scoffed at Isaac, she thrust him out of her house; so when thou seest the riches and honour of the world scoff and jest at the honour of God, away with them. And for to take away all doubt and scruple, and to the end that no man might think the performance of this commandment to be impossible, after that God had given this commandment unto Moses, He said forthwith: "This commandment that to-day I command thee is not above thee, nor far from thee, nor in Heaven, that thou mightest have occasion to say, Who amongst us

* Rom. viii. 35, 38.

shall be able to ascend up into Heaven to bring it down unto us that we may hear it, and put it in execution; neither is it placed beyond the seas, to the intent thou mayest not say, Who shall be able to pass over the seas, and to bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do that which He commandeth? But it is near unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart. To the end that thou mayest perform it, see that thou love thy God and Lord, and that thou keep His commandments."*

FIFTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

HOW THE COMMANDMENT OF THE LOVE OF GOD IS THE GREATEST AND CHIEF COMMANDMENT.

AFTER Thou hadst answered, O Lord, to him that demanded which was the greatest commandment of the Law, saying to him, that he should love God above all things,† Thou addedst yet further, "This is the greatest and first commandment." This is a very great and principal commandment, and greatest in worthiness, for that all the rest may be without thy friendship but this only; it is great in merit, and this is a great commandment, for that the act and work of this precept, which is to love, is more excellent than the works of the other commandments. The fulfilling of this commandment is of itself meritorious, which is not so in the other commandments, but only by virtue of this commandment. He that performeth this com-

* Deut. xxx. 11—16. † St. Matt. xxii. 37, 38.

mandment meriteth by itself, but he that performeth the precept of almsgiving, of fasting, or any other commandment or good work, meriteth not by itself but by the virtue of this commandment of love, for that charity giveth the heavenly reward to all our works.

By virtue of this commandment all our works have their being and value, and without it all of them lose their estimation. It is great because Thou dost greatly require it at our hands, and it giveth great peace and quietness in our soul, and it obtaineth a great crown in Heaven if it be kept, and great torments in hell if it be broken. Finally, this is the great commandment, and so great a commandment that without it all the other commandments are but small, and as the Apostle saith, nothing. "If I should distribute all my goods among the poor, and yield up my body to be burned in flames of fire, if I want charity it profiteth me nothing. If I should have the spirit of prophecy, and should know all mysteries and all sciences, and had all faith so that I could remove mountains, if I have no charity, I am nothing."* And, contrariwise, very small things with love are made exceeding great; for Thou sayest, O Lord, in Thy Gospel, that for giving a cup of cold water with love, which is but a small matter, Thou wilt give heaven.† O wonderful Alchemy, which converteth all that it toucheth into gold! O perfect life of virtues, without which no virtue hath life! O true queen of all virtues, and all good works and ornaments of all Christian life, Thou turning away Thy face all things are changed into nothing, but showing Thy

* 1 Cor. xiii. 2, 3. † St. Matt. x. 42.

countenance, breathing and sending Thy Spirit, all things are refreshed, and the compass of the earth is renewed. Thou sendest us headlong into hell if Thou forsake us, and pluckest us out of it if Thou be present. With Thine absence Thou destroyest all things, and coming unto them Thou givest them life. Thou quickenest man if Thou turn unto him, Thou enrichest him with Thy presence, and maketh him as it were divine and heavenly. It is a thing of all things most marvellous. There is nothing more happy than Thy presence, nor more miserable and unhappy than Thine absence, for Thy presence draweth us unto God, and Thine absence plucketh Him from us.

The most excellent work that my soul can do is to love her Creator, and therefore, O Redeemer of the world, Thou hast given us this commandment of love with so great charge that in every point Thou declarest all the particulars how Thou wouldst be loved, and Thou didst conclude saying that this commandment was the greatest, the principal, and the first commandment. It is the first in worthiness, for that Thy holy love is the furnace wherein all virtuous works are refined. This is the great and new commandment, whereof Thou saidst, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another."* How, O Lord, is that new which Thou hast so many years before commanded? It is new, surely, for we have not received the spirit of servitude in fear, but the spirit of adoption of children, in the which we call Thee Father. It is not a commandment of fear but of love, and given after a new manner; "Not graven in

* St. John xiii. 34.

tables of stone, but in the tables of our hearts,"* and it is fulfilled and executed after a new manner, for that men, seeing how much Thou hast loved us, even unto the death of the Cross, and beholding so great and exceeding love, do learn to love Thee with a new kind of love, having experienced such a strange and new love. And so this holy commandment of love is both old and new; old as touching the giving of it, and new concerning the virtue, force, and value of love, for that from the same time men and women began to give themselves to do all things for Thy divine love, hearing the Apostles preach how that, being God, and overcome with love, Thou hadst suffered Thyself to be nailed on the Cross with great torments thereby to deliver them.

O new commandment of love, and new kind of loving! seeing that, to give us this love, and to enkindle in our hearts this heavenly fire, Thou hast showed us such new tokens of infinite love as the like have never been seen nor heard of. This is the end of all the commandments, according to that which Thy Apostle saith, "The end of the commandment is charity, of a clean heart and good conscience, and unfeigned faith,"† and is as much as to say the very scope and perfection of the whole law. So that this commandment is as it were the North pole, whereby all the other commandments take their course and are governed, by reason whereof the Apostle St. Paul, having treated of many virtues, when he would speak of charity, writing unto the Corinthians, said, "Now will I show you another way more excellent."‡ Love

* 2 Cor. iii. 3. † 1 Tim. i. 5. ‡ 1 Cor. xii. 31.

is such an excellent thing that, without toil, it worketh by another man's hands, and maketh another's good his own commodity without prejudice to any. "I am partaker," saith David,* with all those that fear God; taking pleasure in the good that others do, I am partaker of their merits. Behold now, my soul, how great is the excellency of this singular and chief commandment of love; and such is the skill of love that, like a hard hammer of iron, at every stroke that it striketh it fetcheth forth sparkles of the fire of love.

If thou see thyself prosper in health, honour, and riches, take out hereof the fire of love in praising God. If thou see thyself sad, persecuted, and desolate, take out of it the fire of love in thanking God. If thou see thyself afflicted and charged with the burthen of sin, strike out thereof the fire of love, humbly craving His divine help and calling for His mercy. O most pleasant precept of love! And how great a favour hast Thou done me, my God and my whole bliss, in commanding me to love Thee! Love is a very pleasant, delectable, and sweet thing, and there is nothing therein sharp, hard, or painful. If, for to obtain possession of Thy kingdom, Thou shouldst have commanded us to sail the whole sea, to travel long journeys by land, to go wandering many years in banishment, or in such like laboursome and painful thing, I might seem to have some excuse, although not lawful nor sufficient; but, seeing Thou commandest me no more but to love Thee, being a thing so easy and pleasant, it is great folly to lose to reign with Thee and Thine Angels for not loving.

* Psalm cxviii. 63.

If a King should command to be proclaimed that to any one that should love him he would give a part of his kingdom, and the more that he loved him the greater part he would give him, how many should you find to love him to get of his goods? But Thou, O Lord, Who art King of Kings, givest Thy glory to such as love Thee, and hardly canst Thou find any that love Thee. Thou art He, O Lord, Who saidst that Thou standest at the gate and callest, and desirest to have it opened unto Thee.* Wherefore dost Thou ask leave? Enter, Lord, into the house which Thou hast framed. Who would ask leave to enter into his own house? Great, undoubtedly, is Thy meekness, O Lord, seeing that, creating our soul for to dwell in it, Thou wilt not enter violently, nor by force, but upon her own goodwill, and coming to enrich her dost yet ask leave! "Open to Me, My lover and sister! Behold that I have My head full of sweet dew of Heaven and waters of peace."† Behold, I come not unto thee as having need of a lodging, for eternity is My resting place, but for thine own profit. What hast thou seen in Me wherefore thou shouldst not love Me? My heart, O Lord, shall love Thee as much as possibly it shall be able, seeing that Thou requirest to be beloved of me, and givest me such a noble and sweet commandment of love.

* Apoc. iii. 20. † Cant. v. 2.

FIFTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

HOW GOD OUGHT TO BE BELOVED, FOR THAT HE IS OUR LORD.

ANSWERING, O Lord, to him that demanded of Thee which was the greatest commandment, Thou saidst, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy power."* In these few words Thou dost with all brevity exactly set down how Thou wilt be beloved of us, and the reasons and causes wherefore Thou wouldst have us love Thee. We ought to love Thee with all our heart, soul, and forces, and we ought to love Thee because Thou art Lord, and because Thou art God, and because Thou art ours.

It is requisite that I contemplate and consider in my understanding every one of these points in particular, to the end that my will may be inflamed in Thy divine love, and that my soul may ascend to enjoy the sweet embracings of her Spouse. Thou touchest in these words the reasons wherefore I ought to love Thee, saying—"Thou shalt love thy Lord God with all thy heart," as if Thou hadst said, in more plain words, Thou shalt love Him because He is Lord, thou shalt love Him because He is God, and thou shalt love Him because He is thine. And thou shalt love Him with all thy heart for these three causes, because He is Lord, because He is God, and because He is thine, insomuch that thou shalt love Him for Himself, because He is God; thou shalt love

* St. Matt. xxii. 37; Deut. vi. 5.

Him for things that He hath, because He is Lord; and thou shalt love Him for thine own cause, seeing He is thine.

On every side, O Lord, Thou showest Thyself very amiable because Thou art good, amiable because Thou art pleasant, and amiable because Thou art profitable. I cannot, therefore, O Lord, fly from Thy love, neither can I excuse myself for not loving Thee. I will love Thee, my strength and my whole weal, seeing that Thou art my Lord. The fruit of a tree and vine do rightly belong to the lord that planted them, and he that should take away from the owner the fruits of his vineyard might justly be accused of theft and robbery, wherefore the Apostle saith, "Who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit?"* All we men who live here in this world are as trees planted by Thy divine hands, and in every one of us Thou hast engrafted Thy powers, which are understanding, memory, and will wherewithal to serve Thee. If, then, the tree with the fruit belong to the owner, I am likewise bound to render and yield myself with my powers unto Thee, my God, Who art the Lord and Master thereof. And who oughtest thou then to love, my soul, but Him that hath given thee power to love, and upon whom art thou to use and exercise thy knowledge but upon Him that hath given thee understanding to know? Whom oughtest thou continually to keep in memory but Him that hath given thee power to remember? "Those that receive their soul in vain," saith the Psalmist, "shall not ascend to the mount of God."† They undoubtedly have received their soul and powers in

* 1 Cor. ix. 7. † Psalm xxiii. 4.

vain who do not employ and occupy them in those things wherefore they were made. Thou hast made me, O Lord, that I might undersand the chiefest good and felicity, and that understanding it I might love it, and loving it possess it, and possessing it enjoy it. I will not receive my soul in vain, neither shall my will at any time be idle, but I will spend the nights and the days giving the fruit of my will, which is love, unto Him that hath planted the tree, Who hath given me power for to love.

Worthily were those labourers chastised and thrust out of the vineyard who paid not unto their lord the rent and fruits thereof.* He deserveth surely to have his will taken away that employeth it not in Thy love; he is unworthy to possess Thy gifts that useth them not to good. If Thou, then, be my Lord, and that all that I have be Thine, wherefore do I not serve Thee with that which Thou hast given me? Rightly and by great reason shall that saying fall out upon me which Thou hast pronounced in the Gospel against ungrateful persons, when Thou sayest, "He that hath, to him shall be given; but he that hath not, from him shall be taken away that which he seemeth to have."† When a servant receiveth of his master some great favour, if he show himself thankful it causeth his master to bestow on him some greater favour; but if he be unthankful, he doth not only not do him any more, but taketh also away that which he had given him before. So he that shall use well the benefits which he hath received from Thy bountiful hands shall receive other new gifts; but if he be ungrateful, that which he seemeth to have shall

* St. Matt. xxi. 41. † St. Matt. xiii. 12.

be taken from him. And hereupon were they chastised of whom the holy Apostle said, "That whereas they know God, they have not glorified Him as God, or given thanks, but have become vain in their cogitations, and their foolish hearts have been darkened, and seeming to themselves wise they became fools." They knowing Thee, O Lord, with the understanding that Thou gavest them, had their will idle, not loving nor giving thanks unto Thee, O Lord, at Whose hands they received these powers; and they who ought to have loved and adored Thee, their Lord and Creator, came to worship idols of wood and stone.

Although we strike fire out of a steel and flint stone, yet it taketh not without tinder, so although I may strike out of my soul with the steel of understanding upon the flint, which art Thou, my God, the light of understanding and many sparks of perfection which I shall come to know in Thee, yet shall the fire of Thy divine love never enkindle in my soul if the tinder of my will be not a means thereto. What availeth it me to know Thee if I love Thee not? Wherefore desire I to have my understanding occupied in contemplation of Thy goodness and the excellency of Thy Divine Person, having my will idle? It is meet and requisite, therefore, O Lord, that I love Thee as I know Thee, and that as I employ my understanding to know Thee, so likewise that I spend the whole course of my life in loving Thee, yielding and rendering the fruits of the powers of my soul unto their Lord and right owner.

O infinite love, and sovereign bliss! my will, although a free power, knoweth not whether it be free or no; nay, I say, she is not free, but captive of Thy love, for

although I would not love Thee, yet can I not cease loving of Thee, neither will I enjoy such a wicked liberty as to be able not to love Thee, for Thou hast discovered to my understanding so great a part of Thy divine perfections, that I cannot stay my will though I would, but that she will cast herself with the wings of her affections outspread into this furnace of infinite fire of love. Command me what it pleaseth Thee, but do not command me not for to love Thee, for it were to me a thing impossible to cease from loving Thee. Thou, O Lord, art He Who said unto my soul, "Put Me for a mark in thy heart and in thine arm, for love is as strong as death, and emulation endureth like hell."* Death killeth both friends and enemies, for it devoureth both those that love it and those that hate it, and so Thy love extendeth itself even to Thine enemies, which burning love no abundance of waters have been able to quench nor any great tribulation and adversities to extinguish. Thou sayest unto me, O Lord, that I should therefore put Thee for a mark in my heart and in mine arm, to the end that I love nothing else with my heart and with my works, but Thee only, seeing that with such an exceeding fervent and vehement love Thou lovest me, that Thy love comprehendeth all, as death all those that are mortal; and Thou sayest, moreover, O Lord, that as hell tormenteth all those that come in it, so doth this zeal and love inflame Thee in charity.

Hear now, therefore, my soul, a thing incredible but yet most true. If God could possibly be afflicted and tormented, it could be by nothing else but by love,

* Cant. viii. 6.

and if Thou wilt not believe me, set before thine eyes thy Spouse, Jesus Christ, Who is the Image and Substance of God, and very true God, in Whom are lively represented all the affections of His Eternal Father. He it is that saith, "I come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled. I have to be baptized with a baptism, and how am I straitened until it be despatched."* Our Lord was afflicted and tormented, feeling the flames of love and affection that He bore us. Thus thy Lord and God confesseth that He was tormented with love, and seeing then, O Lord, that Thou art so great, so loving, and so good, and that the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass the stable of his master,† so will I know Thee, my God, for my Lord, and myself for the work of Thy hands, and will not suffer any creature that wanteth reason to excel and go beyond me, but I will acknowledge Thee for my Lord, I will worship Thee as God and will love Thee as the chiefest felicity and infinite goodness, giving all that I am unto Him that hath given me all that I am, and all that I can, and all that I have.

* St. Luke xii. 49, 50. † Isaias i. 3.

FIFTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

HOW GOD OUGHT TO BE BELOVED FOR THAT HE IS GOD.

THOU art, O Lord, our true God, and Creator of Heaven and earth, the chief felicity, in Whom is and from Whom proceedeth all that is good, and most worthy, and best deserveth all love, be it never so great. How much, O Lord, ought I, miserable creature, to love Him that is very God, omnipotent, eternal, infinite, incomprehensible, essentially good, and a mere act of goodness? How great Thy glory, how great Thy sweetness, how great Thy delight, how great Thy light, how great Thy perfection, and finally, how great is Thy accomplishment of all felicity, and of all things that can be desired?

Enlarge Thy bosom, O my soul, extend Thy affections, and stretch them out like a skin and as the Prophet saith, "Enlarge the place of thy heart, stretch out the skins of thy habitation, draw out thy cords far off, and knock in thy pins,"* for that majesty, that goodness, and that bliss, which He hath prepared for those that love Him, doth far exceed thy capacity, and all that thou art able to desire. All our affection compared with this highest felicity is as it were a drop of water in comparison of the great ocean sea; for that infinite ocean of glory and beauty, that bottomless depth of light and brightness, which our desire is not able to comprehend nor attain unto, doth far exceed all understanding and human desire.

* Isaias liv. 2.

This was signified in the crown which compassed the propitiatory round about in the *Sancta Sanctorum;* for that Thy goodness and divine majesty is like a most perfect spherical and round circle, without beginning and end, and worthy to be beloved for Thine own sake, by Whom and for Whom all love was made, and unto Whom all love doth flow, for that God is the Creator of love, unto Whom every creature is directed by the force of love. Unto God, therefore, is love only due for Himself and His own sake, as well as honour, wherefore if we love anything, and love it not for His sake, we love it in vain, neither ought the Angels for themselves, and as the last end of our love, to be beloved. So amiable art Thou, O God, that of all things, yea, such as want sense, Thou art in this manner beloved; for what else are inclinations of natural things but a kind of love whereby they are carried towards Thee, although through their imperfection they are not able to attain to the place whereto they tend, to wit, to the bliss increated, but remain still in the nature created, and participate thereof. What else is the weight of the stone but a kind of love that it hath to the centre, and what else is the lightness of the fire but a love that it beareth to its sphere? All things do naturally desire their good, and there is nothing without love, and this natural desire of good in all things may in a sort be called the love of God; but because an insensible nature cannot aspire to the unchangeable good, therefore it stayeth and resteth in the good by participation, but the intellectual and reasonable creatures, which are Angels and men, have this preeminence, that they are able

to attain unto the highest good and felicity that they desire and are capable of.

Wherefore goest thou, my soul, roaming up and down amongst creatures, and seeking the highest good and felicity in corruptible things of the world? Turn thee unto thy God, for in Him shalt thou find infinite goodness, delight without measure, unspeakable beauty, and all thy bliss and felicity jointly together, according to that which He Himself said unto Moses: "I will show thee all bliss."* Imagine not thy God wise, mighty, or beautiful as a man or Angel, for men and Angels are but accidentally good, but God is essentially and substantially good, not by adherence of anything, for that no goodness or beauty can be joined to His goodness whereby He can be made more good or beautiful, neither is there any other goodness mixed or intermingled with the nature of God, but God Himself is infinite and immeasurable goodness, beauty, wisdom, and power. And so in all other things touching God they are said not denominatively and by participation, as in other creatures, but essentially.

That which we have said of the goodness, wisdom, and beauty of God, beware that thou extend it not in like manner unto other natures as to call God likewise colour, and whiteness, and other such like things as He is called greatness, strength, power, and wisdom, for these things do simply name perfections in God, and consequently in creatures, but those other things not so, for God is not white nor red, nor of any colour, as He is wise and of power. This name God,

* Exodus xxxiii. 19.

and thus to be God, includeth in it all delight, contentment, rest, and joy that may be imagined; it includeth all profit and commodity that may be thought, and containeth in it all that is honest, holy, and good. This is to be God, to comprehend and have in Him all good things that are honest, profitable, and pleasant. If, then, the cause why I place my love and affection upon any person is for that I hope to receive thereby some one of these three good things, that is honest, profitable, and pleasant, wherefore love I not Thee, my God, Who art most rich and dost abound in them all? It is my great folly, O Lord, if I love Thee not, since on every side Thou showest Thyself amiable and worthy to be beloved; amiable because Thou art good, amiable because Thou art pleasant, and amiable because Thou art profitable. Thou canst not excuse thyself, O man, for not loving God. If thou be virtuous, love God for His virtues; if thou be covetous, love Him because He is most rich; if thou desire pleasures, love Him for that in Him are all delights that can be imagined. Oh, of how great power must He needs be Who with three fingers, as the Prophet saith, holdeth up the immeasurable weight of the earth,* and with such violent swiftness turneth about the heavens, and assuageth the raging of the sea with weak and soft sands. Oh, how merciful is He Who, seeing so much wickedness, dissembleth, and how loving to His friends is He Who peacefully entreateth His enemies.

Thou only, O Lord, fillest and satisfiest the desire of my soul, as a seal imprinteth a bare piece of wax;

* Isaias xl. 12.

and whereas all things are more perfectly in Thy Divine Majesty than in themselves, hereupon it cometh to pass that all things naturally are to love Thee. How, then, can our love wander or be separated from Thee, seeing that in Thee it is fixed, it is preserved, and it is made perfect. How can my love be separated from its object? If I will sell my love, who can buy it better than Thou Who art most rich, and Who art able to give me life everlasting? If I will give it freely, who doth better deserve it? If I will yield it upon force, who can more violently take it away from me? But if I will give it for courtesy and thankfulness, unto whom do I owe so much, and am so much bounden? I must needs, therefore, love Thee whether I will or no, seeing Thou art my God in Whom are all eternal good things, beauty, riches, and delights, and finally all good. And, therefore, as the stone by its natural inclination tendeth downwards, so if love be let hence, it will naturally go unto Thee, my God.

If I set my eyes and look upon Thy Divine Majesty, I behold there a bottomless sea of goodness, and immeasurable light, and infinite beauty; if I turn me to Thy creatures, I see innumerable Angels,* beautiful, noble, bright, shining, and most pure, unto whom this visible world is subject, for corporal creatures are subject to the spiritual. I behold, likewise, the beautiful heavens, the glistening stars, and most bright planets, and all this so good and in such perfection, that many of the Gentiles have worshipped them for gods; and if I descend a little

* Daniel vii. 10.

lower, I shall see an infinite number of divers creatures, and if I should demand of all this, What it is that they do? they would answer, Nothing else but obey and serve the highest God and Creator of all things. "By Thy order the day persevereth, for all things do serve Thee;"* there is not so much as a little gnat that with all its power doth not do this. And what, then, shall I do now? All other creatures striving who shall serve Thee best, shall haply man be idle? It is meet, O Lord, that I love Thee with all the force of my love, and as much as is possible for me.

FIFTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

HOW GOD OUGHT TO BE BELOVED BECAUSE HE IS OURS.

THE love of oneself is natural unto all men, and, consequently, to love those things that are ours; and therefore, O most merciful and loving Lord, Thou hast not left any one thing untried whereby to be beloved of us. What tongues of Angels or of men were ever able to express the inventions and divers means that thou hast used for to be beloved of so miserable a creature as is man? Thou knowest well, O Lord, and very well Thou knowest, how much we are affectionate unto our own things, and that we can hardly withdraw our love from ourselves, or from that which is ours, and therefore, to gain our love by

* Psalm cxviii. 91.

this means, Thou vouchsafest to become our Brother, and very Man as we are to converse with us, and to give Thyself for us, that we might thereby love Thee as our own. This Thy Prophet Zacharias meant when speaking of Thy coming to the world He saith, "Rejoice, daughter of Sion, behold thy King cometh unto thee."* He saith He was ours, and yet not content with this, he addeth further that He came for us. Seeing, then, that we bear so much affection to our own things, and are so great friends of our own profit, let us love Him that is ours, and that came down from Heaven for our commodity.

Hereupon said Josue to the people of Israel, "Have you diligent care to love the Lord your God."† So much, O Lord, art Thou ours, that Thou art mine more than mine own, and so dearly hast Thou loved me, that Thou hast accounted and esteemed me more Thine than Thyself; and therefore it is good reason that I love Thee more than myself, seeing Thou hast vouchsafed to die for me, and art more mine than myself; for if Thou hadst not more esteemed the life of my soul and my salvation than Thine own temporal life, Thou wouldst never have offered up Thyself to death to redeem me. "I am the Lord thy God,"‡ saidst Thou to the people. Many lords and kings there be that are their own, others that are their kinsfolk's and not their own, and others that are their friends', for that they aver themselves wholly unto them; but Thou our God and Heavenly King wouldst not be Thine own, but ours. What hast Thou, O Lord, that is not ours?

* Zach. ix. 9. † Josue xxii. 5. ‡ Deut. v. 6.

If the heaven, it is ours by the virtue and influence whereby we live; and so likewise is the earth which Thou hast given to the children of men.* Thou hast created the stars and the planets for service of the people, and Thyself reigning in Thy heavenly kingdom Thou hast given as our reward and hire.

Thou, O Lord, art He that saidst, "I am thy portion and thy habitation." Thou art more for the seignory that Thou hast in me than all the rest of the world besides, and Thou art more entirely and perfectly in me than mine own substance, and therefore ought I to love Thee more than myself, or than all other creatures. A man naturally loveth better the city where he was born and brought up than any other, his own house better than any other man's, and his own father better than any other. If this, then, be so, it is great reason that I love Him that is the whole good of all creatures and mine own proper good. And touching some effects, Thou mayest be called more man's than any other creature's. First, in these creatures that want knowledge it is manifest, seeing they know Thee not, and we know Thee; and although the Angels know Thee, yet tookest Thou not upon Thee the nature of Angels, but Thou didst of man. Neither gavest Thou to any of them so much grace and glory as to the Soul of Thine only begotten Son and of the most sacred Virgin His Mother. "He received not the Angels, but the generation of Abraham,"† saith the holy Apostle. It cannot be said any Angel is God and God is an Angel, as may be said by this union, man is God, and God is Man;

* Psalm cxiii. 16. † Heb. ii. 16.

and therefore may it well be said that Thou art our God and our Lord and properly our own, seeing that Thou art our Redeemer and hast bought us with Thy precious Blood, and hast endured great pains and labours for our love, and finally sufferedst death itself, whereby Thou satisfiedst Thy Father for us. These nails are mine, these whips and crown of thorns are mine, this Cross is mine, and the graces and heavenly treasures are mine that Thou hast merited for me and only for my profit.

If a thing being our own be an occasion and cause that we love it and esteem it, it is meet, and very meet, that, as Thou art my God and my Lord and all mine, I esteem and love Thee above all things. A man is a great friend of his own profit and commodity. Now, if I love honours, riches, and pleasures, by loving Thee I shall have all these things with Thee. In saying unto me that Thou art my God, Thou givest me to understand that if I make that account of Thee, I possess all the felicity in the world, if I well weigh and consider it. But the world is not of that mind, for that, as the Prophet saith, it thinketh that happiness consisteth in prosperity and in abundance of honours and riches, and such as possess these things they call happy men. "But blessed," saith David, "is that people whose God is their Lord."*

Then being ours, we enjoy with Thee all good; and if Thou be mine, why should I, who love all that is mine, separate myself from Thee, my God, Who art mine? Wherefore, O my soul, dost thou exempt and

* Psalm cxliii. 15.

withdraw thy God out of the common love of thy things, seeing that He is thine above all things and more than them all? Is He haply, amongst all things, deemed of all other unworthy to be beloved? Nay, seeing thou lovest all things that are thine, and He is more than anything besides, thou oughtest of all things most to love Him.

Will not God be angry, and that upon just cause, at such an execrable contempt? What shall I say, my soul? What shall I say unto thee, thou wretch? Art thou not ashamed and confounded at this thy great wickedness? Thou lovest the things that are thine, and yet thou lovest not nor desirest nor labourest to obtain that everlasting and most excellent inheritance of thine which shall endure for ever. Thou hast lost a jewel, and therefore art sad; thou hast lost thy money and art sorrowful; and thou hast lost thy God, and it grieveth thee not, as though God were not more thine than all these other things. If thou lovedst thou wouldst be sorrowful, and the more that thou lovedst the greater would thy sorrow be. Because thou lovest temporal goods, it grieveth thee to lose them; and because thou lovest not God, it never troubleth thee to have lost Him. Oh, how much art Thou ours, O Lord, and how much hast Thou yielded and given Thyself unto us, seeing Thou hast given us Thine own life and all that was in Thee! Thou hast suffered to be tormented for my sake, insomuch that Thy tongue, which Thou wert only able to use, Thou employedst in our service, entreating Thy Father for us, and afterwards making intercession unto Him with tears for our

sins, and wert heard, as saith the Apostle, for Thy reverence.*

Thou hast made us lords of all that is Thine, and hast clothed those that are of Thy house with a double suit of apparel,† with grace and glory, and all that ever we have need of. What master doth so diligently provide for his servants, and what lord can be found so good, so gentle, so affable, and so bountiful towards his? Thou dischargest none but such as first put off themselves. Thou givest us food; Thou moistenest our heritages; Thou sendest the sun to shine upon the good and the evil, and Thou rainest upon the just and the wicked;‡ and Thou art so much ours, and so much employest Thyself in our service, and so givest Thyself unto us, that Thou hast given us Thine own Flesh for food and Thy Blood for drink.

O precious Pearl and most excellent Margarite, which, being dissolved in vinegar at Thy most bitter Passion, vouchsafest not only to become ours, but also our food and life! And seeing, O Redeemer of the world, Thou art so much mine, I will love Thee as mine, and will never content and stay myself until I be Thine as Thou art mine, giving Thee my life and my soul and all that is in me, to use as Thine own and at Thy pleasure.

* Heb. v. 7. † Prov. xxxi. 21. ‡ St. Matt. v. 45.

FIFTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

HOW GOD OUGHT TO BE BELOVED WITH ALL OUR HEART.

IN Thy Law, O Lord, when Thou commandest us to love Thee, Thou addest, moreover, that Thou art our one and only God. If, to put the case, as it is impossible, Thou wert not one God but many Gods, I might have some excuse for not loving Thee with all my heart, for that my heart should be separated and divided into divers parts; but being but one only, it is an easy matter to love Thee with all my heart, setting my whole love and affection upon Thy Divine Majesty. He that loveth Thee with all his heart hath always his thoughts settled on Thee, although he be occupied about other matters, and if any man think that it is impossible to set his thoughts for the most part upon Thee, let him look upon a man that buildeth a house or doeth any other work that he loveth and desireth to see brought to an end, and he shall see that his mind runneth altogether upon that which he loveth, insomuch that his mind and thoughts are as it were never off the work, looking whether he can perceive any end of the work and after what sort he shall enjoy it, yea, and many times he dreameth of it in the night and awaketh out of sleep with this thought.

If I loved Thee, O Lord, with all my heart, I should always think on Thee, and never let my Beloved slip out of my memory, although I went about other things. "Look where my treasure is, there is my

heart;"* and look where my love is placed, there are also my desires and affections settled. He that loveth Thee with all his heart doth always think how far to serve Thee, he desireth to be continually conversant with Thee, and both all that he hath, of his own or of others, he desireth to spend it with Thee and to employ it in Thy service.

When Thou commandest in the Law that a false prophet should not be heard, Thou saidst also, "Give not ear to the words of such a prophet, a dreamer, for the Lord thy God tempteth you, to wit, whether you love Him or not with all your heart and with all your soul."† When I give one part of my heart unto the world as a false prophet, who lieth and deceiveth me with his promises, I divide my heart between Thee and the world, and therefore Thou saidst by the Prophet Joel,‡ "Convert ye unto Me with all your heart." Set not one part of your love upon yourselves nor upon your goods, but let all your whole love be settled on Me and on those things that I command you. In saying that we should love Thee with all our heart, Thou givest us to understand that Thy holy love requireth a whole soul for its lodging, and that it will have a whole heart and a whole house, to the end Thou mayest fill it all with the liquor of Thy sweetness. Thou will not have, O Lord, a divided heart, but a whole and entire heart. In that judgment and sentence that Solomon gave‖ when he commanded to divide the live child, and to give to either of the two women a part, she who was not the true mother and

* St. Matt. vi. 21. † Deut. xiii. 3. ‡ Joel ii. 12.
‖ 3 Kings iii. 25, 26.

had no right unto the child would have had it divided, and that each of them should have had half, but the true mother would not yield to this decision, but said, "Nay, rather let it be given whole and alive to the other." The false and deceitful world, which wrongfully challengeth a part of my heart, would have me to divide it in the midst, whereof she would have the one half and the other I should give unto Thee, O Lord, insomuch that loving Thee I should love it jointly with Thee, wherein were neither right nor reason but that it should be given wholly unto Him Whose own properly it is, and that the true mother should receive it. "Wherefore goest thou halting, my soul, on two sides?"* Wherefore goest thou two ways? Hereupon, O my Lord and Redeemer, taking Thy leave of Thy disciples at Thy Last Supper, Thou saidst that it was expedient for them that Thou shouldst go from their presence, for unless Thou wentest the Holy Ghost should not come unto them.† Art Thou haply, O Lord, any deadly sin that hinderest the coming of the Holy Ghost into the souls of Thy disciples? Wert Thou at deadly feud with the Holy Ghost, or were Ye in any point contrary, seeing that You could not both dwell together. Those blessed Apostles were virtuous and had renounced the world, and were come to the fountain of life, and loving Thee as they did perfectly, because that in their love that they bore Thee there was a certain mixture of the love of Thy corporal presence and beauty of Thy most sacred Humanity, Thou wouldst purify and make spiritual that love which Thy disciples did bear,

* 3 Kings xviii. 21. † St. John xvi. 7.

depriving them of Thy bodily presence, to the end that they might love nothing but spiritual things, and taking from them visible things that they might set their whole desires upon invisible things, so that, having their affections wholly inflamed in that which is divine and heavenly, and distracted from all corporal things here present, their souls might be disposed to receive into them the Holy Ghost.

Then Thou wentest, O Lord, touching Thy manhood, as a harbinger of the Holy Ghost, Who, preparing a lodging for a great Prince who was to come to lodge in it, would not suffer the master of the lodging to keep any stuff in the house, but commanded to cast all things forth, and that the chamber should be clean emptied and pestered with nothing, that it might be fit to receive the greatness of that mighty Prince Who filleth the whole room. And therefore wouldst Thou, O our sweet Saviour, that the hearts of Thy disciples should be free, not only from the love of the world, but also from that which had any savour or shadow of the world, that Thou wouldst have them deprived so much as of a kind of taste and delight which their souls received of their corporal presence, being honest and good, and wouldst so purify and make spiritual their affections, that Thou permittest them to have nothing that bore any colour or show of corporal or present good.

If this, then, be so, how can I love Thee, my God and my whole bliss, with all my heart, having it so much given over and addicted to the world. How can I give it Thee whole and entire, being so full of my own self-love? Thou wouldst have the whole

lodging vacant and unpestered, Thou requirest the whole heart entire and void of all strange love and contrary to Thy holy love, and I know not how I shall be able to offer it whole and entire unto Thy Divine Majesty, having engaged it to the world and my passions. If Thy holy Apostles, whom Thou callest Thy friends,* had not perfect disposition to receive into their souls the Holy Ghost, what readiness or disposition is mine, being so full of flesh and blood, for to receive the same Holy Ghost into my soul? For that Thou wouldst have the Patriarch Abraham to serve Thee with all his heart, and to break off altogether with the world, and to be perfectly divorced from his own land and natural country,† Thou commandedst him to go forth from it, that by this Thou mightest confer and communicate with him, and make him worthy to receive the benefits that Thou hadst prepared for him.

Oh, how solitary and entangled wouldst Thou have our heart, O Lord, from the world, seeing that to a soul Thou hast said by the Prophet Osee, "I will carry her to a solitary place and I will talk to her in her heart."‡ Thou speakest, O Lord, to our soul in silence, when there is in her no noise of appetites and her own passions. What requirest Thou, O Lord, of us in Thy law, but that we serve Thee with all our heart?‖ and requirest us in the Scripture to bestow it on Thee, and nothing pleaseth Thee that is not done with love. The devil is content with anything, be it never so little, like another Pharao, King of Egypt, who, when

* St. John xv. 14. † Gen. xii. 1. ‡ Osee ii. 14.
‖ Deut. x. 12.

he could hold the children of Israel no longer captive, requested them yet to leave their herds of cattle in Egypt, or at the least that they should bless him before their departure and afterwards say well of him.* The devil, who hath done nothing for us, loseth nothing by being content with anything that we give him, but Thou, O Lord, Who hast given us all that we have, and at Whose hand we have received all that we are, wilt have the whole heart unto Thyself and will not be content unless I give it Thee all, without dividing to any other.

O Lord, seeing that now I am fallen into the reckoning, and do know, O Lord, how much I am indebted unto Thee, and do understand that all that I have is nothing in Thy sight and is little worth to do Thee any service for the great benefits that I have received of Thee, and do know that Thou art content with my heart and that the same only Thou requirest; I do here humbly offer it up unto Thee, receive it, O Lord, from me, who give it Thee wholly, and reserve no piece to myself; and yet with all this I am not able to discharge the bond wherein I am bound unto Thee, neither do I acquit anything of all that I owe Thee. Thou followest, O Lord, the heart of man, for in it Thou hast left the treasure of Thy Blood, for which Thou hast shed it. "I will call unto Thee, therefore, with all my heart: O Lord, hear me."†

* Exodus xii. 31, 32. † Psalm cxviii. 145.

FIFTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

HOW GOD REQUIRETH THE INWARD PART OF OUR SOUL.

COMMANDING us, O Lord, that we should love Thee with all our heart, Thou wouldst not only show the way of truth, but so much desiredst our salvation that Thou wouldst not only leave us the whole book of Thy law at large, but also vouchsafedst to make an epilogue of Thy will, that brevity might be a cause whereby we might the better learn the thing which so much imported us, and knowing it might keep it in memory, and remembering it might fulfil it, and fulfilling it might attain the desired end, which is Thy glory and bliss eternal.

In saying that we should love Thee with all our heart and will, Thou wouldst have us, O Lord, to give Thee the inmost part of our soul. The inner part of the beast, O Lord, that they sacrificed unto Thee, Thou wouldst have to be sacrificed in fire,* and all this, as saith Thy holy Apostle, was done in figure, and did signify a mystery. Thou desirest not outward things; Thou wilt not have that which is external and temporal, as the world, which contenteth itself with things that are good in show and vanities, but commandest us to offer and dedicate unto Thee the inner part of the soul, and this not as I list myself, but sacrificed in the fire of Thy holy love.

* Lev. i. 9.

And is it much, O Lord, that I should offer unto Thy Divine Majesty my heart inflamed in Thy holy love, seeing that Thou, my God, didst so burn upon the Cross with the fire of infinite love, whereon Thou didst put Thyself for my sake and for love of me, insomuch that there sprinkled out so many flames of fire from that Thy sacred breast as there were wounds in Thy most sacred body? When the eagle-falcon, ger-falcon, or any other kind of long-winged hawk, hath flown a high pitch, and skimming through the air hath mounted up to the clouds, and making the game to stoop seizeth on it; if she be rewarded with the heart or brains of the fowl she holdeth herself well contented and satisfied.

O princely Hawk, which camest down from Heaven into the bowels of the Blessed Virgin, and from her womb unto the earth, and from the earth unto the desert, and from the desert to the Cross, and from the Cross unto hell, and from hell unto Heaven, and madest those turnings to pursue our souls which Thou wert losing, and which without Thy helping hand had perished, is it much that Thou requirest our heart for reward of the travail and pains that Thou hast taken for us, and for satisfaction of all that Thou hast done to work our redemption? What hawk ever made such a brave flight, or lost so much blood in the pursuit of her game, as the salvation of our souls hath cost Thee, our God and our Lord. Woe is me, wretch, that after so many benefits received, and at the end of so many years, I show not that thankfulness as I ought by giving Thee my heart, seeing that Thou desirest it to lodge in it and to enrich it. Oh, how many are there,

my God, and I beseech Thy Divine Majesty that I be not one of that number, who give their hearts and their souls unto the world, and unto Thee, O Lord, only outward things, which are external ceremonies, signs, and shows of Christians. Others, having no evil conscience, give alms, build hospitals and monasteries. Although their works be good, yet wanteth there the chief and principal, which is the heart, which Thou requirest, for that there within it Thou wouldst lodge. Thou saidst in the Law that the inward of the sacrifice should be thine.* "Bless thou therefore, my soul, thy Lord, and all things within me His holy name;"† "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God."‡

If Thou wert lodged in my heart, O Lord, all the rest of my life I should be well governed. With a little turn of the heart the whole life is turned, as a huge and mighty ship is guided by steering it gently with a little rudder. Love is nothing else but an earnest and well ordered will. There is no will that loveth Thee, my God, as Thou desirest to be beloved, but only Thy divine will, neither can there any other be able. This Thy divine will loveth Thy goodness with infinite love, and so much as the same goodness deserveth by knowledge thereof, that Thou lovest Thyself with infinite love. The Saints do find a lightening of their desires, seeing them so perfectly accomplished, and so likewise it is a part of their glory, knowing and seeing that Thou lovest them with so perfect love. And is this much, then, that Thou commandest me to love Thee, and requirest my

* Lev. iii. 5. † Psalm cii. 1. ‡ Psalm lxxxiii. 3.

heart? Seeing that, although the Beloved, which art Thou, O Lord, be sovereign bliss and infinite majesty, yet doth not all that men or Angels be able to produce by loving exceed a limited love, and cannot exceed it, and therefore doth Thy infinite Majesty demand of us still a greater tribute, requiring, and that justly, to be infinitely beloved of us, if it were possible. Praised be Thy holy name, for that itself alone payeth itself, loving itself in eternity, as it is worthy to be beloved. But here as I am able, though not as I desire and am bound to do, "I will love Thee, my God, my strength, my refuge, and my Redeemer."* I will give Thee, O Lord, my heart, untangled from the love of this world, according to that saying of the Psalm, "If riches abound, set not your heart upon them."† My heart, being sequestered from riches and all temporal affection, I will offer it up unto Thee only, the true and living God.

I see, O Lord, that all things do love, yea, though it be to the loss of their own natures; and for the Angels to serve Thee it is no great pains unto them, seeing that to serve Thee is to reign; but for them to serve man by Thy commandment, and, being blessed spirits, to be appointed our servants and ministers to a creature, which, as David saith,‡ Thou hast made less than themselves, is not this a disgrace to the angelical nature? For the heavens to turn about because Thou hast so commanded them, and hast made them subject, it is no marvel, for it is to their honour; but that they should continually roll about for the love of man, is not this wonderful? Every creature groaneth, and

* Psalm xvii. 2, 3. † Psalm lxi. 11. ‡ Psalm viii. 6.

suffereth pain in travail, and is subject to vanity.* All inferior creatures corrupt, and worthily surely do they come to their end, seeing it is to the service of their Creator, but that it should be for the love of man it is much to be noted. If all things, then, O Lord, do love Thee with all their heart, and that to their own loss and detriment, destroying themselves in Thy service, is it not a lamentable thing and most indecent that only man alone should be cold in Thy service and faint in loving Thee, seeing that all things consume and waste themselves in his service for to stir up man to the love of his Creator.

All creatures, O Lord, loving Thee, every one in their kind, and in the best that they can, shall only I alone, for whose service they were all made, live and not love Thee? And although none of them all loved Thee of themselves, yet when I love Thee all things that Thou hast created love Thee, for man is all creatures; so that if he love, all creatures love, and when he loveth not, all of them are deceived of their end. If the King serve any man, him that the King serveth the whole kingdom serveth, and therefore, seeing man is king of this visible world,† him that man serveth all the world serveth, and loveth him that man loveth, and what greater injury can man offer than not to love Him that all the world loveth? Wherefore wilt thou still, my soul, go wandering and roaming in these outward things, whereas thy Spouse, Jesus Christ, desireth to retire Himself into thy heart, and to make within thee a place of peace and rest.

* Rom. viii. 22. † Psalm viii. 7, 8.

Love thy God and Lord, offer unto Him the bottom of thy heart; and seeing that He, of the infinite love that He bore thee, gave thee His Heart and life, and, the better to please thy taste, gave it thee inflamed with the fire of immeasurable love that He bore thee, offer thou likewise unto this bountiful Benefactor thy inward affections, loving Him with all thy heart above all things beloved.

FIFTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

HOW GOD IS TO BE BELOVED BECAUSE HE IS OUR STRENGTH.

THOU commandest us, O Lord, to love Thee with all our heart, and with all our mind, and with all our strength. I know well that hereupon some ground great doubts and questions; for that such perfection seemeth unto them impossible for such as walk here in this life, as that they cannot love God with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their mind, which belongeth properly to the blessed, whose force is wholly spent and employed in the love of God. But never suffer us, O Lord, to say that Thou commandest Thy creatures anything impossible. What, then, shall we say to this matter? This question is easily dissolved, if the meaning of the precept be well understood, for we are able to love Thee with all our hearts and with all our strength, if that we offer up unto Thee our whole heart, and not

wickedly divide it as Cain did,* who, although he offered well, yet because he made an evil petition, was therefore reproved, as saith the Scripture. So some there are that divide their hearts, giving one part to good, and another to the world and pleasures. Who would in such sort please God, and be His servants and continue in His good grace and favour that they might not displease the world nor any ways offend it? They love heavenly things in that sort that they would withal have earthly; they would enjoy the joys of Heaven, and withal possess the pleasures of earth; against whom the Apostle St. James saith, 'Adulterers, know you not that the friendship of this world is an enemy of God?"† Such as these, because they offer not all, offer nothing at all, for God accepteth not a piece of the heart, neither deigneth the Holy Ghost to dwell jointly together with vanity; and hereupon it cometh to pass that because they love not with all their heart, they are transgressors of this commandment. Of this a Prophet saith: "Their heart is divided."‡ These cannot escape spiritual death, for the division of their heart is a death of the soul; for as a body cloven asunder cannot live, no more can a soul divided in two.

Love thou therefore, my soul, God only, and for God, and so that thou give the weight of thy love upon thy Spouse, Jesus Christ, only insomuch that thou suffer not thyself to be distracted with the lawful love of other creatures. Let all thy whole study be to give thyself unto God, and to prepare for Him only a neat and clean lodging in thy soul, and not pestered

* Gen. iv. 6, 7. † St. James iv. 4. ‡ Osee x. 2.

with worldly things. Let all our thoughts, O Lord, all our affections, all our desires, and all the whole power and virtue of our souls be transformed and consumed into Thee, insomuch that Thou mayest be beloved of us Who art the force of our soul. And wherefore, then, O our God, shall I build in my soul stubble and rotten straw, clay, brick, and tiles of Egypt, whereas I may build in it precious stones and emeralds of the divine and pure love, as the walls of the celestial Jerusalem were built which St. John saw.*

O Sweetness of my life and Spouse of my soul, why should I make a mixture of Thy love with the love of worldly and earthly things? I will love Thee, my God, with all my heart, and with all my strength and power, and in such sort will I love and esteem Thee, that I will love myself not for being mine own, but for being Thine. The natural love that everything hath for itself, and to the being and conservation of itself, is in me so changed into Thy holy love that my nature, by the aid and assistance of Thy holy grace, desireth not nor loveth anything else in Heaven or on earth, but Thee alone, my only bliss, my Redeemer, and the centre of my soul.

O incomprehensible God and our Lord, if the Prophet Eliseus advised the widow who did owe so many debts to provide empty vessels to receive that oil which miraculously flowed in her house, and she did so, and discharged both her debts that she did owe, and remained rich besides,† how much more, O Lord, desirest Thou, Who art a Prophet of Prophets, that our heart and the powers of our soul

* Apoc. xxi. 19. † 4 Kings iv. 2—7.

should be empty and clean from all worldly and self-love for to receive the precious oil of grace. To require to be beloved with all our heart and with all our strength, is to command us not to occupy or empty our heart upon love contrary to Thy divine love, and that we give Thee our vessel empty and clean, without all dregs of vile love. With this like, and such wonderful oil, both the debts of our sins are paid, and, besides, we bring Thee indebted unto us, our Lord and our God, unto which debt Thou vouchsafest to bind Thyself by the law that Thou ordainest.

If Thou didst pardon Mary Magdalene, it was because she loved exceedingly, as Thou saidst Thyself in the house of Simon the Pharisee, "Many sins are forgiven her, because she loved much."* She anointed Thy holy feet with precious ointment, she shed so many tears that she washed Thy feet therewithal, and dried them with the hairs of her head, and having done this and other holy works of humility and devotion, Thou didst attribute the remission of her sins to her love only, and therefore saidst not that they were forgiven her because she wept much, but because she loved much. Her repentance and sorrow for her sins, and all the tears that she shed, and all the good works that she did, had not procured her pardon of her sins if she had not loved. The contrition that causeth remission of sins proceedeth of the love of God.

By means of this holy love the devout and noble penitent had both wherewithal to pay her debts and

* St. Luke vii. 47.

also to make God her debtor; for so great is Thy goodness, O Lord and our God, that Thou vouchsafest to become debted unto those that love Thee. That same holy woman did utterly renounce the world, and cleansed her heart of all earthly affections, and yielded it wholly unto Thee, and because she loved Thee with all her heart and with all her strength, all her sins were forgiven her. The like happened unto David, whom Thou pardonedst for the love that He bore Thee, reproving Saul, and casting him out of his kingdom.

When my heart is wholly on Thy side, I may lawfully love any other thing I list, secondarily, and only for Thee, and for love of Thee. When a King hath taken a castle, and hath put a garrison and governor within it, he suffereth none to come in but such as are for the King, keeping the gates fast shut and defended from the enemies: so Thou, O Lord, hast placed the senses for garrison of our souls, and will not that reason, the governor of the fortress of our heart, unto which it belongeth to discern who is on Thy side and who taketh part with the world, open to any, but that it first know what part he taketh. The love of creatures, when it is for Thee, may enter into the heart and agree with Thee; the love of temporal goods, if they have respect unto God, may enter in; and, finally, everything that is for God, the love of God admitteth unto it. Thou art jealous, O Lord, and as a husband liketh not that his wife should love any other man better than himself, no more canst Thou be content, being the Spouse of my soul, that she love any other thing more than Thyself, and

therefore wouldst have her to love Thee with all her heart and with all her strength.

Thou art He that said unto Moses, "I am the Lord thy God, strong and jealous;"* and for the love that Thou bearest us, when Thou seest that we love anything better than Thyself, Thou takest it away from us, to the end we should love Thee only. But if obstinately we persist, Thou sufferest us to love what we list for punishment of our obstinacy; and therefore sayest Thou to Thy people by a Prophet: "I will take away My jealousy from thee,"† love what thou wilt, and as inordinately as thou listest; I care not, for I have now no jealousy of thee. Whereupon the Prophet Isaias, seeing how disordered men were in their love, marvelling, O Lord, how Thou couldst suffer it, being so jealous as Thou art, and as he knew Thee, demanded of Thee, saying, "Where is Thy jealousy and Thy strength?"‡ What is become of that jealousy that Thou puttest in Thy souls, when Thou sayest that Thou wilt put Thy jealousy in me, and as now also Thou sayest that we should love Thee with all our heart and with all our strength, and in such sort that there reign no other love in our hearts but only that which we owe unto Thy Divine Majesty? The soul that will not play the adulteress ought only to have this love, loving Thee above all things, and with that force and great power which love and affections make in the heart where they are lodged.

* Exodus xx. 5. † Ezech. xvi. 42.
‡ Isaias lxiii. 15.

FIFTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

OF THE GREAT FORCE OF THE LOVE OF GOD.

"LOVE," saith the Scripture, "is as strong as death;"* nay, it is stronger than death. For we see that where love and death bid defiance one to the other and enter into combat, love winneth the field and getteth the victory, as it is evidently verified in the holy Martyrs; and so great force was the love which was encamped in the breasts of those invincible knights of Jesus Christ, that they set light by torments and feared not death, of which they obtained very glorious victories, because they rather chose to die than to leave that love which they bore unto God. Love triumpheth over death and gaineth the victory of it. Unto whom is there a crown given but to him that overcometh? The Scripture saith that none shall be crowned but he that fighteth lawfully.† Wherefore hath the Martyr a crown given him but for his victory? Wherefore doth Holy Church celebrate their conquests and crowns but for the victories that they have obtained of tyrants, of themselves, of torments, of the fear of death, and of death itself? Love is of greater force than death, for love hath vanquished all the miseries of the world; and of death itself, with all his great power and strength, it hath gotten the victory. The Apostle St. Paul, armed with this love, scorned at death and at all the miseries in the world, saying, "Who, then, shall separate us from the charity of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or famine, or

* Cant. viii. 6. † 2 Tim. ii. 5.

nakedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword? I am sure that neither death nor life shall be able to separate us from the charity of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

St. Paul feared not death, for love is of greater power than death. What vanquisheth death? Death overcometh Kings, Princes, Emperors, and Popes. All this is nothing, for death overcame the King of Kings and the Creator of all these Princes, Popes, and Emperors; it entered into the Heaven and found the Son of God in all His glory and majesty, as eternal and complete as His Father, and every way as good as He, of the self-same nature; and, buckling with Love, laid Him on the ground, and of immortal made Him mortal and passible, and caused Him to do things that, considering on the one side He was God, and seeing on the other side what He did as man, the work that love caused Him to do did seem unto the world unseemly; and so saith the Apostle unto the Corinthians, "We preach Jesus Christ crucified, to the Jews indeed a scandal and to the Gentiles foolishness."† And what caused this? The force and power of love. If God became Man, and put Himself on the Cross for man, all that was for love, according as it is written: "God, Who is rich in mercy, for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us even when we were dead by sins, quickened us together in Christ, by Whose grace we are saved."‡

Love vanquished the Invincible, and He vouchsafed to yield Himself as conquered, not of any other, but of Himself. He yielded and rendered Himself to the

* Rom. viii. 35, 39. † 1 Cor. i. 23. ‡ Ephes. ii. 4, 5.

great captain, which is holy love, whose victory is so glorious, so pleasant, and so joyful, that whoso is vanquished winneth the field, and who yieldeth to holy love goeth his ways with triumph; and he that is wounded and slain by the hands of heavenly love escapeth with life. If love, therefore, vanquish the Invincible, and make Him thrall unto death, and overcometh death itself; if it overcometh, it must needs be more strong than death. Why, saith not the Scripture that it is strong as death, and stronger than death? It is in very deed more strong than death; but it compareth love with what it might best compare it, and to the strongest thing that it could find.

Although at the Transfiguration of our Lord His face was more bright than the sun and His garments whiter than snow, yet saith the Evangelist that His face did shine as the sun and His garments became white as snow; because, amongst all things that we see, there is none to be found more bright than the sun nor whiter than the snow. He gave his similitude as he was able, though not according as love deserved. Nothing is stronger than itself, and seeing love is death, therefore he saith that love is strong as death; for as death killeth the outward senses of the body, depriving them of all natural appetites that are proper unto them, so love enforceth the lover to despise all desires of the earth.

This heavenly love killeth the concupiscence of the flesh, the sensual appetites, sensual life, and the outward man, that the inward man may live to Jesus Christ.* Love is the life and death of the soul, according to

* 1 St. John iii. 9.

her two parts: the superior, which is the intellectual and reasonable part, which giveth force to our body; and the inferior, which is the sensitive part. Whereupon the Apostle St. Paul, treating of the great force of love, said unto God, speaking of the effects that it worketh in our souls, "That for love of Thee we are mortified all the day long."* The love of God killeth all that is of the world, and therefore the Apostle calleth the Colossians dead, saying, "You are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ your God."† O strong and most mighty force of love, and far more strong than the power of death. Death durst never have encountered with the Son of God, nor have presumed to come near Him, if He had not first been vanquished of love. If one should go to the field with another, it were no great matter to overmaster his enemy, having both his hands bound, without weapon, and being already overcome by another. His courage were to be commended that should get the mastery of his enemy, being free and at liberty, and that with his own weapons.

Thus death overcometh men that are already vanquished, bound hand and foot and condemned to die, for, as says the Apostle, "It is appointed for men to die once."‡ But only love leaveth his adversary at liberty; it enforces nobody, and by the free will of the soul it is overcome of love; it leaveth man his weapons, for it bereaveth him not of his senses, and yet in the end love beareth away the victory. It is by so much stronger than death, in that it alone is able to overcome and kill death. Love

* Rom. viii. 36. † Colos. iii. 3. ‡ Heb. ix. 27.

took away the force of death on the Cross, and many men and delicate ladies and tender, seeing it so disarmed and vanquished by love, have boldly set upon it and overcome it with the armour and weapons of love. Let tyrants use their cruelties, let the fire burn, let cruel torments be prepared, let swords and butcherly knives be whet and made sharp, let wild beasts roar and tear in pieces and devour, let them bring iron hatchets to open, rend, and pluck out their bowels, let them melt pitch and rosin, and what else can be devised most terrible and fearful, and all this doth the great force of love overcome and vanquish. Love yieldeth to no torment, nor shrinketh with any loss or detriment; but the fire of love burning in those blessed breasts of the holy Martyrs, the more water of persecution they cast upon it, thinking to quench it, the more it flamed.

O mighty fire! And if it might please Thee, O Lord, to send it to my soul, how little would I esteem those things that now do trouble me. Who gave courage unto Moses so valiantly to oppose himself against the proud and mighty King Pharao?* Who caused Elias so sharply to reprehend King Achab;† and Eliseus the three Kings that went forth unto war,‡ but Thy holy love? Who made St. Peter Head of the Church, and the rest of the holy Apostles (who at first were weak creatures) with such a noble and valiant courage to answer in the Council that it was most just to obey God than men, but love? This is that holy love which feareth nothing, which treadeth all things under her feet, and maketh every-

* Exodus v. 1. † 3 Kings xviii. 18. ‡ 4 Kings iii. 13, 14.

thing plain and easy. It can do all things, all things are possible unto it, and it maketh no difficulty at anything; and, finally, love hath so great power, and so great is the force thereof, that it bringeth God down to the earth and exalteth man unto Heaven.

FIFTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

HOW ALL MEN ARE ABLE TO LOVE GOD.

WHAT excuse shall I be able to make at the Day of Judgment, before Thy divine presence, my God and my Lord, if I love not so exceeding great goodness and mercy? What requirest Thou of me but love, after so many and so innumerable benefits as Thou hast bestowed and dost bestow every hour upon me? Thou demandest nothing else for all but love; wherefore Thy servant Moses said to the people of Israel, "And now what doth the Lord God demand of thee, but that thou fear thy God and Lord, and walk in His ways, and love Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."* For that Thou knowest, O Lord, how ready and apt men are to love Thee if they will; Thou commandest them to love Thee. Who is able to express or utter in words how pitifully and mercifully Thou hast done this, for if our salvation had consisted in any other work, many might have excused themselves, in that many should have been excluded out of Thy glory, because the works whereby

* Deut. x. 12.

they were to obtain it were either not easy or impossible for them. If Thou wouldst have had us saved by almsgiving, the poor then should not have been saved, because they have not wherewith to give alms. If our salvation had consisted in fasting, then should not the sick and weak have been saved. If in learning and wisdom, what should have become of the simple and ignorant? If in virginity, in what should married folks have hoped: and if in poverty, what should the rich have done? And so in all other things many might have excused themselves, and so have remained excluded out of the eternal bliss. But who can excuse himself of love? Who can be lawfully excluded? All men are able to love Thee, O Lord, wise men and fools, rich and poor, little and great, young and old, men and women, and to every estate, and to every age, love is common; no man is weak or feeble, no man is poor, no man is old, to love. As Thou wouldst have all men, O most merciful Lord, partakers of Thy glory, so hast Thou set such a price thereon that every one may buy it. If any man should say that he cannot fast, or that he cannot give alms, or that he cannot go to Mass, we ought to believe him; but can any man say that he cannot love? This is impossible. There are many now in Heaven that never fasted, that never gave alms, that never went in pilgrimage, because they had no power and ability to do these things, but there is not any one that hath not loved God. A man might justly excuse himself for doing these things, but it is not possible to allege any excuse for not loving. Thou mayest love, whether thou eat, drink, go, sit, labour, or rest, or howsoever thou behavest

thee, and which way soever thou turnest thyself, thou mayest love, for love is ours, and nobody can steal it or take it away from us. The holy Martyrs are witnesses hereof, from whom the cruel tyrants might well take away their lives, but not their love; and very willingly they gave their life not to lose their love, for love is of greater value than life. And thus Thou, O God, as a most merciful Lord, and most wise Governor of this world, hast so created all things for life, and so desirest the salvation of all, that Thou barrest up the way of obtaining it to none. And, therefore, although in these temporal transitory goods Thou hast made us unequal, making some rich and others poor, nor givest us those things when we ask them nor as we desire them, yet in lawful and true goods, which are necessary for eternal salvation, Thou hast made none poor, but hast given equal power unto all to enrich themselves; that, as much as they would, and every one that would, and every one as he would, might make himself so rich and so great as he would dispose and settle himself unto grace. These goods that the men of this world do so much set by and love, Thou makest but small account of, my God, and they are reputed in Thy house as bran and as things of little value; but the true, constant, and permanent goods Thou hast reserved for every man's free will, insomuch that whosoever will have them, cannot be deprived of them. Both in the one and in the other, my God, Thou showest Thyself to be merciful; both in the one and the other just and holy, that thereby the mouth of the wicked may be stopped, and have nothing to say, and have no reasonable and just

excuse to allege for themselves against Thee, how great soever their wickedness be.

Of all these Thy goods, love is the highest, and there is nothing in Thy house more precious and excellent than Thy holy love. When in the desert Thou didst send down manna from heaven to the people of Israel, some gathered more and some less, but none had too much or too little, and every one had as great a share as was needful for him;* even so, O Lord and our God, Thou givest Thy holy love to every one of us without exception of persons. The Father Householder is ready to send all into His vineyard, and will deny none the penny of bliss that will labour in it, for the head of the Church affirmeth that He is not a respecter of persons.† He calleth all to the marriage, and denieth His holy love to none, if they by malice and obstinate perverseness shut not their hands and refuse not to receive it,‡ and so make themselves unworthy of it. Whom hast Thou not invited to Thy holy love, whom hast Thou rejected, and to whom hast Thou denied it, that hath asked it? Thou art He that saith, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are burthened, and I will refresh you."§ "Come ye and buy," O Christian souls, "without either silver or exchange, wine and honey. Why do you lay out your silver and not upon bread, and your labour and not upon fulness. Hear Me and eat the good, and your souls shall rejoice in fatness."‖ Come unto Me and your life shall live.

Wherefore wandereth my soul thirsty in the dryness

* Exodus xvi. 18. † Acts x. 34. ‡ St. Matt. xxii. 2—9.
§ St. Matt. xi. 28. ‖ Isaias lv. 1—3.

and barrenness of this world and forsaketh Thee, my God and my whole bliss, in Whom are heaped up all the goods that I can desire. Thou makest Thyself manifest to all, O Lord, Thou showest Thyself to all, and extendest the wings of Thy mercy upon both good and bad, and invitest to Thy holy love both the just and sinners. No man can excuse himself before Thy divine presence if he love Thee not, and at the general Day of Judgment all creatures shall hold their peace and be silent at the uprightness of Thy justice. All of us are able to love Thee, and when we love Thee not, it is through our own fault, and we can allege no reasonable and sufficient excuse when we love Thee not.

Although now so long as here we live, how much soever we endeavour ourselves, in part we love, and in part we desire, so that the commandment of Thy holy love cannot be fully and perfectly accomplished; whereas we are commanded to love Thee with all our heart, and with all our mind and soul. For so much as the body which is corrupt and presseth down the soul and the senses of man, with the weight hereof I do bend me low to these inferior things. We are not able wholly to occupy ourselves in that we would, but the body laboureth to withdraw the soul unto many vain things, which slinking out at certain secret chinks that we can hardly discern, goeth wandering and roaming up and down musing upon many things of the world, and being thus evil divided cannot lay hold and link itself to the highest Good of all goods, as reason would she should, and were most expedient for her. But the time will come, O my soul, when all these motions of

thy heart shall cease, and all variable changeableness of thy vain thoughts shall become calm and gentle, and things shall be still and silent, and thou shalt be glad and rejoice because thou shalt obtain constancy of mind, and thou shalt abound and marvel, and thy heart shall be enlarged, and shall remain firm and stable for ever without change or mutability. Then shalt thou glow like a burning coal, and so, enkindled and wholly inflamed in love, shalt be wholly transformed into thy God, and so coming altogether unto Him shalt, as it is written, be made one spirit with Him,* "Whose fire," as Isaias saith, "is in Sion, and the furnace in Jerusalem."†

Here in Sion is a fire that smoketh, and in Jerusalem a flaming furnace, a furnace in very deed, wherein the vessels of those celestial spirits are lightened with that most burning and mighty divine fire, which are united and transformed into Thee, my God, for to taste of that everlasting and inaccessible stream of glory which never faileth nor decayeth.

* 1 Cor. vi. 17. † Isaias xxxi. 9.

SIXTIETH MEDITATION.

HOW WE CANNOT PAY GOD WITH ANYTHING BUT WITH LOVE.

WHAT recompense can I make Thee, my Creator, my Redeemer, my Governor, my Judge, and my Rewarder? These five great creditors I have, and am indebted unto, and know not well which of them first to pay. To my Creator I owe my life, for of Him I received it gratis; and to my Redeemer I owe the same life, for that He gave His for mine on the Cross; to my Governor, Who has fed me from my youth* for nothing with so many and divers delicacies and in such sundry sorts, I confess that I owe my life, which I possess by His means and benefits; and my Judge I am not able to satisfy all the days of my life. And what, then, shall I give to so liberal and bountiful a Rewarder? Though, haply, so long as I live I be unto Him obedient, and suffer for His sake all asperity and terrible things; shall my work, therefore, for all that, be equal to the prize that He hath prepared for me? "The passions of this time are not condign to the glory to come that shall be revealed in us."† Unto all these things I owe myself, and know not to which I shall give myself first, being poor and needy. I am indebted ten thousand talents, according to the parable of the Gospel,‡ and every day there soundeth in my ears that terrible and dreadful voice of the Gospel, which saith, "Give Me an account of thy

* Psalm lxx. 17. † Rom. viii. 18. ‡ St. Matt. xviii. 24.

stewardship."* What shall I do? whither shall I go? seeing that, although I sell myself, I am not able to make satisfaction of one for a hundred. With this my careful anguish of mind, the Prophet Micheas meeteth justly, saying, "What worthy thing shall I offer unto our Lord? Shall I offer Him sacrifice and a weanling of a year old? Shall I, haply, be able to appease our Lord with thousands of sheep, or thousands of fat goats? Or shall I give my first begotten for my wickedness, and the fruit of my womb for the sins of my soul? No, surely. No more but to show thee, O man, what is good, and what our Lord seeketh and demandeth of thee. He requireth thee to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk carefully in seeking to do His will, and carefully in all things and by all means possible for to please Him."†

This care and carefulness, O Lord, belongeth to those that love Thee, and not to those that fear Thee; to those that love Thy Divine Majesty, and not to those that fear torments. Give thou, therefore, my soul, this carefulness to our Lord, and thou shalt be acquitted of thy debt. Love Him, and thou hast paid all this tribute; all that the Highest commandeth thee for all the debts thou owest Him. Although He should require thee to enter into hot burning ovens, and to die a cruel death, yet paidst thou not all that thou owest. And how much more art thou bound unto Him, seeing that this thy Lord, "Who desireth not the death of a sinner, but that he live;"‡ nor that thou shouldst kill thyself, but that thou love; and

* St. Luke xvi. 2. † Micheas vi. 6—8.
‡ Ezech. xviii. 23.

with tribute and stipend of love He holdeth Himself fully paid and satisfied.

And why dost thou not pay unto thy Maker and Redeemer this so sweet and pleasant a tribute of love? Why dost thou not love Him, my soul, to Whom thou art so much indebted? The brute beasts do know and acknowledge their benefactors, and the reasonable creature only kicketh against the spur, and man alone is he that rebelleth against God, and denieth the love that he oweth unto Him that hath loved him so much that He hath not sticked to yield Himself to the bitter torments of the Cross to show the great love that He bore him.

O great shame and lamentable misfortune, not to know Him to Whom he is so much indebted, nor to love Him Who deserveth so much to be beloved! So man alone, above all other brute beasts, waxeth proud with the benefits that he receiveth of Thy great liberality. Oh, how justly dost Thou complain thereof, O Lord God, by a Prophet, saying, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the beast the stable of his master; but Israel hath not known, and my people hath not understood."* Ask the brute and unreasonable creatures, O man, and they will teach thee. Be scholar unto beasts, thou who wert created lord over them, for they will instruct thee what thankfulness, what goodwill and love thou oughtest to render unto Him of Whom thou hast received so many benefits. Be ashamed, miserable wretch, to learn to be thankful in the school of beasts, and that they excel thee in virtue which thou far exceedest in reason and understanding.

* Isaias i. 3.

Thou commandedst, O Lord, the hungry lions not to touch the Prophet Daniel,* and they obeyed Thee, and the whale to preserve Jonas, and he accomplished Thy commandment.† Thou commandedst the crows to bring food to Thy Prophet Elias,‡ and they served Thy Saint with great diligence; and not only sensible creatures do obey Thee, but insensible also do serve Thee in that all they are able, and do give unto Thee, their God and Creator, all that ever Thou demandest of them, although by nature they have it not in them.

Thy servant Moses struck the rock with his rod,§ and there presently gushed out abundance of sweet running water, contrary to the natural property thereof. Only man denieth unto Thee, my God, the things that Thou askest him, and demanding of him not anything that he hath not, but which he hath, which is his love and will; and being very easily able to give the thing that Thou wouldst have, and that with his credit and honour, yet will he not grant Thee Thy request.

Thou art harder than the rock, O my heart, seeing that thou gavest not thy love unto God, whereas the stone yieldeth forth abundance of water. Only love maketh thee to be quit with God, and with this only mayest thou pay Him in His own coin. With love only, O our God, Thou wouldst have us pay Thee. If Thou governest me, Thou wouldst not that I should govern and direct Thee. If Thou reprehendest me, Thou wilt not have me find fault with Thee. If Thou chastisest me, Thou wouldst not have me to correct

* Daniel xiv. 42. † Jonas ii. 1. ‡ 3 Kings xvii. 4.
§ Num. xx. 11.

Thee, but patiently to suffer Thee. If Thou judgest me, I ought not to judge Thee, but obey Thee. But if Thou lovest me, Thou wouldst have me to love Thee, because Thou knowest that by loving Thee we shall be blessed; therefore Thou wouldst have us to love Thee. A thing that is given for love cannot better nor more conveniently be requited than with love. The acts and works of my will only am I able to give unto Thee, my God, and of all the works of the will love is the chief and principal. Thou, O Lord, being God incomprehensible and the chief felicity, disdainest not to place Thy love upon a vile seely worm of the earth; and above all, after so many causes and reasons as I have to love Thee, Thou gavest me a commandment of love, as though I were so hard-hearted that I had need of such a commandment. Let the Angels, O Lord, bless Thee. Let the Archangels and Seraphim praise Thee for evermore; and let all the celestial hierarchy extol and magnify Thy name without end; for that, seeing me so much bounden with innumerable gifts and sovereign benefits, Thou demandest at my hands no other tribute but love, nor requirest anything of me but to love Thee. I will give Thee infinite thanks, my God, for the great favour that Thou showedst me, in demanding to be paid with so sweet and delectable service so pleasant and easy to perform; and I will rather suffer all the pains and torments of hell than ever leave loving Thee.

SIXTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

HOW GOD REQUIRETH US ONLY TO LOVE HIM.

OH, "how good is the God of Israel to those that are right of heart."* Thou commandest us, O Lord, and Thou requirest at our hands no other tax nor tribute but that by loving Thee we discharge the bonds wherein we are bounden unto Thee. Come ye therefore, O Christians, and behold well what manner of commandments our God doth give us. They are not surely sharp and difficult, they are not heavy and intolerable, but very pleasant, light, and sweet. He commandeth us not to kill our children, or to cut their throats, as the most cruel devils in times past commanded such as honoured them. Thou commandest us not to hack and mangle our flesh with knives or whips, nor to go barefoot upon sharp thorns or thistles, but Thou commandest us saying, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thyself." I require you nothing else, I demand nothing else at your hands, I ask or seek nothing else of you, nor do I charge and command you anything else. Love I require and demand, and with this alone will I content and satisfy Myself for so many benefits and favours as thou hast and dost daily so abundantly receive at My hands. O man, love, and reign! Love, saith our Lord, and all that is Mine is thine. Did you ever hear anything more gentle, more benign and merciful than our God? Did you ever see

* Psalm lxxii. 1.

any lord so kind and favourable as to demand nothing of his servants but that they should love him? If a King should require nothing else of his gentlemen and subjects for all the favours that he showeth them but only to love him, and should lay upon them no other tax, nor demand of them any other service, how loving, how gentle, how good and worthy to be beloved, would all of his house account and report him? And how exceedingly, and that upon good cause and great reason, would all the people of his kingdom esteem him? Such a one is our King, such a one is our Lord, and such a one is our God. Oh, the like, and such a good and gracious Lord we have in Thee, my God. Whereupon it is written in Deuteronomy,* that Thy servant Moses said unto the people, "And what now, O Israel, doth the Lord thy God demand thee but that thou fear Him, and walk in His ways and love Him?" He requireth of thee nothing else but love, and this did he well know who saith: "The love of our Lord is without spot converting souls, the testimony of our Lord is faithful giving wisdom to little ones."†

The commandments of our Lord are more to be desired than gold, above gold and precious stones, and are sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. What thing, O Lord, can be more delectable unto us than to love Thee? And what can be more pleasant, sweet, or easy? What else is our life without love but a most cruel death? "He that loveth not," saith the Apostle St. John,‡ abideth in death." He that loveth not, even whilst he liveth is dead in heart, for the life

* Deut. x. 12. † Psalm xviii. 8. ‡ 1 St. John iii. 14, 15.

of the heart is love. And "we are translated from death to life because we love. He that hateth is a murderer" of himself.

Oh, how justly is he condemned to everlasting torments that had rather burn than love, for if in charity he had loved, in hell he had never burned. He is evidently, O Lord, convinced to have hated Thee, who had rather choose to burn eternally than to love Thee for ever. What hast thou seen in thy God, O thou damned creature, what hast thou seen or understood in Him wherefore thou shouldst not love Him? What excuse canst thou be able to make at the Day of Judgment, that for all thou art commanded, thou hast not loved the infinite goodness of thy God? Oh, how far more pleasant it is and more agreeable to the noble inclination and nature of our soul to love than to hate, and how far better, O Lord, is it to love Thee than to burn in everlasting fire. Although it be impossible for a creature to hate his Creator, and seeing that God is the object of our will, it is not possible by any reason that our soul should hate the highest good and infinite goodness of our God, as He is God, in Whom are excellently and infinitely all perfections and goods, yet the unbridled will, blinded with her own passions, and carried away with self-love to her damnation and utter destruction, hateth Thy Divine Majesty in that Thou art wise and knowest her malice, and because Thou art just, and as a just Judge wilt punish her wickedness.

But how were it possible for any soul, how wretched soever, if it had but only one spark of knowledge of Thy infinite goodness having once conceived this

bottomless sea of riches unspeakable and incomprehensible goods, to be idle and stand in suspense and to be able to save itself from leaping into the midst of the fire of Thy divine love? Oh, how blind and insensible are they, O Lord, that know Thee not, and what proud souls have they who, knowing Thee, cast not themselves into this burning furnace of Thy holy love? Whereupon stay they? Wherefore tarry they? How long will they linger? Thou being, O Lord, of all things most attractive, for that Thou art most perfectly good in the highest degree, draw unto Thee this my soul, carry my heart after Thee, "pull me unto Thee, and we will run after the sweet savour of Thy ointments."*

How chanceth it that so great a God as is revealed unto me by faith carrieth not my heart to the supreme and chiefest good? What ropes are there, how strong soever, or double iron chains of love of these temporal things, which would not burst asunder for to attain by love to my only felicity? And what dost Thou command me, O Lord, and what else dost Thou require of me but that I love? The judgments of our Lord are true and justified in themselves, more to be desired than gold and the precious stone, and sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. What commandment can be more just? what law stand more with equity? and what precept can be more sweet than this of love?

Thou commandest me not, O Lord, to sail the dangerous passage of the sea, nor to mount up to the clouds, nor to enter into the dangers of wars, nor to

* Cant. i. 3

go barefoot to the Indians, nor to work miracles, but only that I love Thee from the bottom of my heart. Many that are able to accomplish this sweet and pleasant precept of Thy love that Thou commandest them, will not, but are held back with the love of this miserable and wretched world. And what wilt thou allege for thyself, unhappy creature, wherefore thou lovest not God? At that last examination, when all the world shall be judged, what wilt thou answer to so immeasurable clemency of God? How canst thou be mute then? This is that, O Lord, which Thou saidst to Thy people by the mouth of the Prophet Isaias: "Thou hast not invocated Me, Jacob, nor travailed in Me, Israel; thou hast not offered unto Me sheep of thy burnt offering, nor hast glorified Me with thy sacrifices. I have not made thee to serve with oblation, neither hast thou bought Me with silver nor with the fatness of thy sacrifices hast thou made Me drunk, but thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins, and hast put Me to travail through thine iniquities."* As if in plainer words He had said: I have not given thee sharp commandments. I have not laid upon thee heavy burdens that thou couldst not bear. I have not commanded thee to waste and spend thy goods in sacrifices and oblations, but I have commanded thee light and easy things, and thou hast neglected My commandments, thou hast caused Me to serve thirty years for thy sins, and in the end was I enforced to suffer bitter death for thy sake. And therefore, although I had commanded thee very great and weighty things thou hadst been bound to perform

* Isaias xliii. 22—24.

them, and how much more then, seeing I say no more but "Love and reign." I require love, I ask love, and love only I demand, and I will thee no more but to love, and that loving thou mayest lead here a good life, and hereafter live, rest, and reign for ever.

SIXTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

HOW LOVE IS PAID WITH NOTHING BUT WITH LOVE ONLY.

LOVE cannot be satisfied, O our God and our Lord, but only with love, neither can it be paid with any thing but with love, wherefore, although I should give all that I have to one that loveth me, and not give him my love and answer his good will with my good will, I am not discharged of my debt, but ought still to think myself greatly bounden unto him and a very great debtor of his. Love is of so high a price and great value that it cannot be paid with gold nor with silver nor with precious stones, and hereupon it cometh that although our enemy, and those that we like not, should give us gold and silver, or all the precious jewels they have or could give us, we would make no account of them, but esteem all as dirt, yea, and many times we would not receive them at all, whereas, contrariwise, of those who we know do love us and bear us good will, we accept any small gift, be it never so little, and make great reckoning of it, because we respect not the gift but him who gave it,

and with what inward affection he gave it, and that it was for love that he gave it.

In like manner, O Lord, Thou lovest us so exceedingly, that Thou art not content although we give Thee all that we have unless we love Thee, and makest light account of our gifts when they proceed not from love. The Holy Scripture saith, that when Cain and Abel offered up their gifts to Thy Divine Majesty, that Thou lookedst upon Abel and his offering but hadst no regard to Cain and his gifts.* It saith that first Thou lookedst upon Abel and afterwards upon his gifts, for Thou hadst more respect, O Lord, unto his love than to that which he offered; and therefore receivedst Thou the gifts of Abel who loved Thee, and didst reject the offering of Cain because his heart was empty of Thy holy love, and for this cause didst Thou more esteem the poor alms that the old woman offered in the Temple than the great gifts that the rich presented, and saidst that that poor seely woman had given more than those mighty rich men,† although they had offered great and large gifts. Thou respectest more the love than the gift, for Thou lovest us, O Lord, and therefore wilt be repaid with love in lieu of the love that Thou bearest us. Thou wouldst have us to love Thee, and then Thou wilt accept at our hands any gift, be it never so little, when Thou seest that we love Thee. The Hebrews offered unto Thee many great and very large offerings, but because they proceeded not from a heart full of love Thou saidst unto them by the mouth of Thy Prophet Isaias, "What care I for the number of your offerings; I esteem not

* Gen. iv. 4, 5. † St. Luke xxi. 3.

the sacrifices of your sheep, nor the fat of your fat cattle, nor the blood of calves, nor of lambs, nor of goats. When you come before my presence or approach unto Me, who demandeth of you any of these things? Offer unto Me no more of these vile sacrifices, for your incense is abominable in My sight and I detest your feasts and solemnities."*

All that ever we are able to offer unto Thy Divine Majesty is little worth in Thy heavenly sight if it be not accompanied with love. This is that which the Wise Man saith, "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is all man."† If this, therefore, be all man, then without it man is nothing, and because all that we have and all that we are able to give Thee is nothing, unless we give Thee our heart full of Thy holy love, therefore Thou requirest it of us, saying, "Son, give Me thy heart,"‡ as though Thou wouldst have said more plainly, I will not thy goods nor thy gifts, but only that thou repay with love the great love that I bear thee; love I crave and love I demand, for satisfaction of the love wherewith I love, for love can be answered with nothing but with love.

It is meet then, my soul, that love be repaid with love, and that thy love be like to the love that Almighty God beareth thee. Thy love ought to be clean, whole, holy, and without mixture of any other love, that it may be conformable to the love of God that it answereth, for otherwise God will loathe and hate it as a love that is very contrary unto His. Thy Maker loveth thee more than all the creatures of this world, and so do thou love Him alone more than

* Isaias i. 11—14. † Eccles. xii. 13. ‡ Prov. xxiii. 26.

things created. Thy Maker hath ordained all things for Thy service and profit, and so do thou appoint all that is thine to the service of Him. Thy Maker loveth thee with infinite and everlasting love, and so do thou love Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength, and all that ever thou art able.

Repay then, my soul, the love that thou owest to thy God, seeing He requireth and demandeth nothing else at thy hands but that thou love Him. If thou lovest anything besides thou art undone and cast away, thou hast defiled thyself with many sins, thou shalt be tormented with thousands of cares and afflicted with thousand thousands of miseries, and the reason hereof is, because thou hast not placed thy love in its right place, and where it had been meet thou shouldst have placed it. Then shalt thou enjoy all peace in perfection if thou place thy dearest love and affection upon the chiefest and highest felicity. I will set my chief love therefore upon the highest good, which art Thou, my God, and although Thy heavenly love were not necessary for me to gain life everlasting, yet would I endeavour all that possibly I could to love Thee for to obtain Thy friendship. Blessed are they to whom Thou hast said, "Ye are my friends."* Exceeding much honoured are Thy friends, O God, and their principality exceeding much comforted and established. Who would not think himself happy to be a King's friend? Who would not labour to renew his friendship? Oh, how far more honourable and excellent is the friendship of the King of Heaven than any friendship

* St. John xv. 14.

or familiarity that can be had with any Kings of the earth! The only means and remedy that I have to obtain the friendship of God is for to love Him. Thou, O Lord, art He that challengest me to the field of love, and seeing that Thou lovest me, wouldst have me also to love Thee. What is it that might be done, O God, for to gain my love that Thou hast not done? And Thou hast so done all things possible to win and procure my love, as though Thy life and honour depended on being beloved of me, when in very deed, it importeth Thee nothing, and me so near that no less than my life stands thereupon. If Thou, O Lord, wert as one of us, and every of us were as Thou art, what wouldst Thou then do that Thou hast not done now? All the inventions, ways, means, that could be devised Thou hast wrought and dost use, O Lord, to be beloved of us. What rare and strange means hath Thy love found out for to draw my love unto Thee? What shall I say unto this, my God and my Lord, Thou burnest in my love and all the world burneth in Thy love, and in the midst of this furnace of fire stand I cold. Heaven and earth, the elements and all creatures, are inflamed in flames of fire of Thy burning love, and I alone, of all the rest, cold as ice. What greater wickedness than this, O my Saviour and Redeemer of my soul? How chanceth it that that fire of infinite charity which burned in Thy sacred breast, burneth not into coals my icy heart? How chanceth it, my Lord, that the same hot and scalding Blood that issued out of Thy veins in so great abundance, wherewith Thou washedst and bathedst my soul from her sins, left it not warm in Thy love and

fervent to serve Thee in spirit, and to love Thee with most earnest affection, because Thou wouldst have me to repay Thee the great love that Thou bearest me. With love Thou hast done so many things to make me to love Thee, for Thou wilt not have Thy love requited with anything but with love.

SIXTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

HOW MAN HATH PROPERLY NOTHING OF HIS OWN BUT LOVE.

"WHAT shall I render unto our Lord for all the benefits that He hath bestowed upon me."* It is meet, O Lord, that I have something of my own which I may give and offer unto Thy Divine Majesty, for all that I have received at Thy hands. It is reason that I possess something wherewith I may be able to make worthy satisfaction for requital of the benefits and favours that Thou hast done me. For, as it is meet, and Thou wouldst not that man by ingratitude or any other means should perish, but desirest that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, it is requisite upon Thy justice that Thou hast given something unto man which is properly his own, and that he have it in his own power and liberty wherewith he may somewhat requite, if he will, that wherein so many ways he standeth bounden unto Thee; for otherwise it might seem that all the benefits bestowed

* Psalm cxv. 12.

upon man had been given him to his hurt and condemnation, for receiving so much and having nothing properly his own wherewith to make satisfaction, he should show himself ungrateful, for which ingratitude he should rightly deserve to be condemned, which is not to be imagined of Thee, O Lord, seeing Thy goodness and great mercy is so without measure.

Presupposing, then, that man hath something wherewithal to requite God, and that he is master of that only which is under his full power and liberty, let us now see what this is whereof man is lord and master. He is not lord of the goods, inheritance, and possession that he hath, for all these may be forcibly, and against his will and pleasure, taken from him; no more is he lord of his body, nor any part of his body, seeing they are not under his absolute power and rule, for that he may be deprived of his body, and of any part thereof, whether he will or not; he is not lord of his own life, for that it may by force and violence be taken from him; nor will we say that he is lord of his soul, in that it giveth life, and is the force of the body, for that, as he is not lord of his life, no more can he be master of the soul, concerning that part which giveth life to the body. Although the soul be one and simple, and, being a spirit, cannot be divided in two parts, yet are we to consider in it the two offices that it beareth and executeth, being in his body, which are as it were two parts, the superior, which is the reasonable and intellectual part, by which, if we order it, we discourse, understand, and know God. In the sensitive part, and which giveth life, we are like unto beasts, and yet concerning this

part we are not free, but, according to the reasonable and intellectual part, we are most excellent creatures, created to the image and likeness of God, capable of bliss, endowed with reason and free, and adorned with three very notable powers, which are the understanding, memory, and will. It is to be understood that man is not lord of all this superior part that we speak of, for the understanding and memory are two free powers, but man hath freewill, and hereof it is called free, because of the freedom that it enjoyeth, man being absolute lord over it. This is one of the principal powers of the soul, which are understanding and will, and the understanding is no free power, but the will only. Hereupon it ensueth that man is only master of that part of the soul which is the will.

By this we gather that man is lord of nothing, but only of his own will, which is queen and princess in the kingdom of the soul, and so free and mistress in such sort that one cannot conceive the will to be a will and not to be free. If the will were not free it were no will, for it is a plain contradiction to be a will and not to be free. Man is so much lord and master of his own will that it is impossible it should be compelled, constrained, enforced, or violently taken from him. All the power of Angels, of men, or devils, are not able to take from man his will if himself do not freely give it. God hath made him so much master thereof that God Himself doth not compel nor constrain our will, but when He would anything of it, He doth entreat, admonish, inspire, and persuade, but never enforceth her, nor carrieth her, *malgré*, whither she would not. For she is so free, and so

great a queen and lady, that she loveth what she liketh, she abhorreth what she listeth, and doth freely of herself whatsoever she pleaseth, without being of God or anything else carried or compelled against her will.

And seeing no man can give or alienate of himself, but only those things whereof he is master, and man is lord of nothing but his own will, and this will is given for love; for this cause, O Lord, Thou commandest us to love Thee, for that, in loving Thee, we give Thee our will by love, which is all our goods and riches that we possess. Thou dost not require, O Lord, that we should give Thee that which we have not, for it is a folly to will a man to do that which he cannot, or to command him to give that which he hath not, and seeing man hath nothing to give but his will, Thou dost wisely and discreetly require his will, commanding him that he love Thee.

My soul endureth deadly pangs within me, my God and my Lord, finding nothing to give Thee for all that she hath received of Thy most bountiful hands. Blessed be Thou, my God, and a thousand millions of thanks I yield Thee, for that Thou hast vouchsafed to bestow on me something that I may give Thee. If man, seeing himself so much bounden, had nothing to give, nor wherewithal to requite Thee, he were a most unhappy and wretched creature. What should I do, O Lord, if, knowing how much I owe Thee, I had not love and will for to give Thee? Thou hast given me will, which is a free power, which containeth in it one peculiar gift which immediately springeth of it, and this is, that it can never be without giving it to

somebody, and so liberal and noble, that it never giveth but that the will is given with the gift, which is love, the free gift of the will, and properly hers, the precious and immortal treasure of man.

This, O Lord, is my will able to give Thee, with which gift she doth fully satisfy Thee as much as in her lieth. Whithersoever love goeth she carrieth with her the will of the lover, and for that the will is the whole man, we do consequently say that she draweth with her the whole man. Wherefore, when any man giveth another his love, he giveth himself wholly, and is transformed into him to whom he is given; for as love of its own nature is a free gift, which is willingly given and cannot be enforced, it must be given or taken away when it listeth. And seeing those things which we give pass not into the true possession of those to whom we give them, unless they be properly our own and in our free power, it followeth that, as love is the proper treasure of the lover, when he giveth it it doth presently pass into the true possession of the beloved to whom it is given, and hereby the beloved hath free power and absolute signory over him that loveth him. And also for that the recompense ought to be answerable to the love of the Giver of all good, and that love in God is spiritual, immortal, and invisible, that same likewise which man giveth unto God, giving Him this his love and will, is immortal, spiritual, and invisible.

And because Thou knowest, O Lord and our God, that with this only we are able to pay Thee, therefore Thou requirest this only at our hands, and demandest of us this tribute, only commanding us to love Thee.

For albeit Thou art a most rich possessor of all goods, and hast not need of anything that is ours,* yet requirest Thou love at our hands, because with that only we are able to satisfy Thy Divine Majesty. Oh, how great favour hast Thou showed me, O Lord, in that Thou desirest to be beloved of me, and hast given me means and ability wherewith I may be somewhat able to make satisfaction for the great debt that I owe Thee. Love is a force and violent power of the will, which draweth the will after it, and giveth it to the beloved, and with the will giveth itself also and the whole man, insomuch that he who loveth is not his own but his that is beloved.

Love thou, therefore, my soul, thy God as much as possibly thou art able, for, seeing He loveth thee, thou oughtest of right to love Him, although thou canst not equally and in like manner; for the love wherewith God loveth thee is infinite, but thine wherewith thou lovest Him hath both end and measure. But love Him as much as thou art able, and this shall suffice thee, that, being soaked up and transformed into God, thou mayest with thy Beloved live a heavenly life here on earth, and hereafter enjoy Him in Heaven for ever.

* Psalm xv. 2.

SIXTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

HOW WE OUGHT TO LOVE GOD AS HE LOVETH US.

CERTES, my Lord Jesus Christ, although Thou shouldst hate me, yet ought I to love Thee, seeing Thou art my God, my Redeemer, my Protector, my Refuge, and my whole bliss; and how much more, then, seeing Thou lovest me so exceedingly that Thou followest me with benefits, flying from Thee. Hast not Thou, my God, vouchsafed to be judged and condemned to a villainous death, and to suffer bitter torments for my sake? O my God, and what couldst Thou do more for me? Thy holy love, O Lord, is marvellous, seeing Thou hast so loved and exalted me with the love of Thine honour and Thine own life; and if Thou, Who art all in all, lovest us so much, who are nothing at all, how can we, being as we are, not love Thee, the highest good and supreme felicity? Why rendest thou not asunder, O my heart, in consideration of so exceeding and excessive love? Thou art harder than the stones, seeing that such infinite love cannot mollify thee. "The stone," saith Job, "which is the mine of the metal, is melted with fire."* And yet wilt Thou, for all the great fire of charity and heat of infinite love that Almighty God beareth Thee, remain unchangeable? Would to God thou wert of stone, and not of flesh! What a marvellous thing is this, that the flesh of the heart should be harder and more insensible than a stone! Sayest not Thou, O Lord, that Thou wilt take away

* Job xxviii. 2.

our heart of stone and give us a heart of flesh? But nay, rather, O Lord, seeing the stone is more easily mollified than flesh, take from us our heart of flesh and give us a heart of stone.

The stones, O Lord, clove asunder for sorrow at Thy death, and the rocks opened through the heat of the love wherewith Thou diedst. And thou, my heart, remainest hard, cold, and whole, without breaking or dissolving thyself in the love of thy God and Redeemer. But, forasmuch as my coldness hath brought me to this pass, and my ingratitude and hardness of heart hath set me in those terms and estate, that I must become a scholar and learn of the stones, I will love thee, O Lord, for that Thou hast loved me so much, and even so as Thou hast loved me, to wit, sweetly, wisely, and strongly. Sweetly, that is fervently, with all affection, in such sort that my soul being drawn and allured with the delight of sensible things, may not be distracted nor wander in things unlawful; wisely, for that running swiftly and by discretion, I may not stumble at anything; strongly, that is with perseverance, that it may not turn back, overcome with any hardness or difficulty, nor leave off the thing it hath begun. Wherefore, that my soul may not follow after the vanities of the flesh and the world, let it love Thee, O Lord, sweetly; and that it may not be deceived by the guile and craft of the devil, let it love Thee wisely; and that it may not be overcome with any temptation or persecution that may fall upon it, let it love Thee valiantly. Such was the love of Thy holy Martyrs, who, being firmly and strongly joined

unto Thee, might well be cut in pieces, burnt, shot through with arrows, and slain, but could never be separated from Thy holy love. This is that glue whereof the Prophet spake so long before. "The carpenter comforteth his work that he knocketh with his hammer, saying to the glued joint, Thou art good, and fasteneth it down with nails that it may not stir."*

O excellent Joiner, the Spirit of Truth, that Apostolic preacher of the Gospel which beat and built Christ in the hearts of the people, was knocked outwardly with the hammer of persecution, but joined and fastened inwardly with the nails of fear. He was outwardly troubled and vexed, but comforted inwardly that he might not waver in faith, nor that death might not cause him to fall nor stagger, to the nails of fear he added the strong glue of love. "Say to the glue, Thou art good." I say it is good, for without it haply the nail might slip, and so this noble champion perish when he cometh to the trial. It is good, therefore, to join and make fast the nail of fear with the glue of love, that by this double jointure it may hardly be broken; and if haply the nail should start out with the hammer of the persecutor, yet should the mind, linked and joined with the glue of love, be inseparably united to Christ. Seeing, therefore, we praise and honour these champions of Jesus Christ, and that by good reason, let us likewise imitate and follow them. Love yieldeth to no torments, but rather with their devout sufferings they paid unto Thee, O Lord, the love that they did owe Thee, and

* Isaias xli. 7.

thankfully gave blood for blood, death for death, grief for grief, love for love. Though not in like proportion and measure, for the death of any mortal man, be it never so cruel and painful, is nothing comparable to any one of the least torments of the immortal and impassible God; for it is more for the impassible to suffer anything than for mortal creatures to die. Thou ought, therefore, O my soul, so to love thy God as He loveth thee; and seeing that He loveth thee sweetly, wisely, and strongly, love thou thy Lord with like perseverance and force as thou art beloved of Him. Wherefore the Prophet Jeremias saith, "Our Lord appeared unto me afar off; in perpetual charity have I loved thee, and therefore have drawn thee, taking compassion of thee."* He saith afar off because He loved us a long time before we loved Him. He loveth us in everlasting charity, and infinitely for to make our soul infinite, and to enrich it with infinite good, and in this wise, O Lord, Thou hast loved us. Thou lovest not the rich to eat and spend their goods, but to enrich them, nor lovest Thou the mighty to win credit by their means, but to honour them. And Thou lovest not like the world, which loveth for her own gain, but Thou lovest me for nought and freely, that in like sort Thou mayest be beloved of me without hope of profit. "He that is a friend loveth at all time, and a brother is tried in distress:"† Thou hast loved me at all times, as well in adversity as prosperity have I found Thee a faithful friend. Thou lovedst me in Thy adversity of the Cross, and there dealtest for my salvation with

* Jer. xxxi. 3. † Prov. xvii. 17.

great love; and at Thy Resurrection Thou didst the like. Many men when they are in need promise great things to their friends, that thereby they may find favour at their hands, but when they be once come to prosperity all is clean forgotten. So played King Pharao's cupbearer,* who helped himself by Joseph's advice and counsel being in prison, but after that he was restored to liberty and honour he never remembered him. But Thou, my God, not only in Thy Passion wert mindful of us, praying to God for our sins, but being also in so high a place as is Heaven forgettest not Thy charity, but as the Psalmist saith: "Mounting up on high, Thou gavest gifts unto men,"† sending down the Holy Ghost. And so, likewise, is it meet, my Lord and my Redeemer, that I love Thee, persevering in Thy love unto death, seeing Thou hast loved me with such a constant and strong love that Thou hadst rather chosen to die than to leave loving.

* Gen. xl. 23. † Psalm lxvii. 19.

SIXTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

HOW GOD LOVETH US.

IT is now high time, O Lord, to say somewhat of Thy love that thereby ours may be stirred up, for as one piece of iron is made smooth with another, so is our love quickened and revived with another. I wonder greatly in my mind when I consider, O Lord, that Thou lovest me, Thy divine will having infinite goodness that it may love, and infinite beauty for to like, and that actually Thou lovest Thyself without measure, and cannot choose but marvel that Thou findest time and place for to love me. What should I say, O Lord, seeing that with the same will that Thou lovest Thyself I am beloved of Thee, and jointly in the society of so great goodness as is Thine, so vile naughtiness as is mine is beloved, that thereby Thou mightest overcome and destroy my sin and magnify Thy glory.

O the goodness and infinite beauty of my God! "What participation hath justice with iniquity, or what agreement is there between light and darkness? What agreement with Christ and Belial? or what part hath the faithful with the infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?"* And then what affinity is there between this inaccessible light and my darkness? Thou art the infinite light, void of all dimness, wherein is not and cannot be any manner of darkness, and I am darkness itself, and deprived of all light, save only, O Lord, of that which Thou of Thy great mercy and clemency shalt

* 2 Cor. vi. 14—16.

vouchsafe to bestow upon me. And how, then, are my wickedness and darkness beloved in the society of so great light and goodness? Thou hast made me greatly bound unto Thee, having left a place in the heart of the Creator wherein to receive the creature, and yet Thy divine will filling it up so full, Thou hast found a time to love me, having need of eternity for to love Thyself. But why say I a time? Thou hast loved me, O Lord, in Thy eternity and wished me well. How chanceth it then that my soul goeth beside itself seeing so great a good, and letting pass and despising all that ever is in earth or in heaven, casteth not herself upon Thee, my God, and loveth Thee not with earnest love and affection? Why is not my heart warmed with so great a fire as this, like as David's was, when he said, "My heart is made warm before me, and in my thoughts is kindled a lovely fire!"*

This is the place, my soul, where the coals and fire of the love of God are enkindled; approach nigh unto it, and thou shalt receive at least some part or sparkle, and that which thou gettest see thou suffer it not to go forth, but apply thereto the tinder of thy soul, that so thou mayest make it flame, and become a great fire. I know my own nature how weak and frail it is. I know my own filthiness by the sin of our first father, and through mine own wickedness whereby we are all become the children of wrath and unworthy the air wherein we breathe; and Thou knowest me for such a one, and yet for all that Thou lovest and seekest me by so many ways and means, and Thou dost not only seek me and love me, but lovest me so fervently that

* Psalm xxxviii. 4.

my ingratitude and want of love are not able to make Thee leave loving me nor to forget me. Thou sayest, O Lord, by the mouth of Isaias, "Can the mother forget her child, and not have compassion on him that she bore in her womb? But although she forget him, I will not forget Thee, for I have written Thee in my hands, and Thy walls are always before me."* O dear love and tender love! O motherly, and more than motherly love! for we never read of any that went about to remember her of her child, and that used her own hands for the paper, her blood for the ink, and sharp nails for the pen. None hath ever used such a note-book, but only Thou, O Lord, our most dear lover. All the time that Thou livedst, Thou barest us in Thy bowels, bewailing our sins with groans of travail, and camest in the end to die like another Rachel in travail on the Cross that Benjamin might be born alive. Thou forgivest the offences of the miserable sinner; and so great is the love that Thou bearest us, that any little space, how short soever it be, seemeth unto Thee long for redeeming of me, and therefore didst Thou hasten the traitor, Judas, in the night of Thy Last Supper, to despatch quickly the work of our redemption, when he went about Thy death, and to deliver Thee into the hands of Thine enemies. No man desireth so much to be forgiven as Thou to forgive him, and Thou hast more contentment in having forgiven him that Thou wouldst have live, than the sinner for escaping death. Thou lookest not for delays, but Thy law is, that whosoever hath broken Thy laws, let him rend

* Isaias xlix. 15.

his heart asunder for grief, and Thou wilt presently forgive him, so that he have purpose to amend, and either presently receive, or have an intention to receive, the Sacrament. Thou hearest us before we speak, and diedst for us before we were born, and givest all that Thou knowest we have need of. O Lord, if it might please Thee to put us always in mind of Thy fervent love, that we might not offend Thee, and of Thy prayers and intercession for us on the Cross, that thereby we might praise Thee and magnify Thy excessive love that Thou hast borne us, and Thou art not only content to hear us, but also as one that loveth earnestly, is glad, and rejoiceth to hear his beloved; so Thou, O Lord, invitest the soul that Thou hast redeemed, saying, "Thy voice soundeth in Mine ears, for thy voice is sweet and thy face very beautiful."* O Jesus, that face seemeth beautiful unto Thee which, by reason that we have defiled it with sins, we dare not lift up unto Thee; but the truth is, that Thou speakest of that soul which is in grace, which hath not for all that anything to be proud of, seeing that her beauty wherewith she pleaseth Thee is not of her own nature, but Thy gift and grace, and therefore unto Thee is all praise due, and unto us shame and confusion.†

But in Thee, O Lord, it is lawful to praise ourselves, for it is great honour surely to be beloved of so great a Lord, and so great a lover of us, that for our sakes He yielded Himself to torments and to a shameful death, whereof proceedeth all our good being, therefore all the world and our instruction and learning.

* Cant. ii. 14. † 1 Baruch i. 15.

And Thou hast loved us so much as without any profit to Thyself and so greatly to our honour and commodity, as it is not meet that I leave to love Him who loveth me so dearly, loving Him as He loveth me, and in like manner as He hath loved me. The stones love their centre, the fishes the sea, the birds the air, and all things naturally desire their last end. And why go I not then, my God, to Thee by love, seeing Thou art my centre where I rest, the sea wherein I live, and the air whereby I breathe? "For in Thee we live and move and be."* All things seek their rest, peace, and felicity; and wherefore do not I the like? "Turn thee, therefore, my soul, unto thy rest,"† for in thy God and Lord only shalt thou find ease and profit, quietness in thy only refuge and rest. Seest thou not with what a violent force the rivers run into the sea? The reason hereof is, and that the sea for all the entrance of many rivers into it increaseth not nor overfloweth, as the Scripture saith,‡ because they came forth of it.

All rivers come forth of the sea, and return to the same sea, that so they may come forth and run again. All corruptible things necessarily go towards corruption, because of corruption they took their beginning. If, then, brute beasts and other insensible creatures, with violent and headlong speed, make haste to go to the place from whence they came, and run into that from whence they proceeded and took their beginning, behold, O mortal men, and consider the case of the lake from whence you came. Your soul hath proceeded from God only. The river of your soul

* Acts xvii. 28. † Psalm cxiv. 7. ‡ Eccles. i. 7.

issued forth of that immeasurable large sea which He loved so dearly after He had created it, that He spared not to give the price and infinite treasure of His blood for her redemption, and to lose His own life to give life unto her. And why runneth she not then unto Him? O Creator of our souls! O Redeemer and Restorer of them! And what can miserable man, a sinner, do for Thee, whom Thou hast prevented with so many favours and loved so fervently? Thou hast loved me, O Lord, eternally; Thou followest and soughtest me with infinite love, being lost; and Thou hast brought me in captivity with most famous and notable works, and now see I myself so captive of Thy love, that I set more by this captivity than by the liberty of sinners, for it is better to be one day in the porch of Thy house, and to enjoy some little part of Thy spiritual and sweet consolations, than many thousands of worldly delights.

SIXTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

HOW GOD LOVETH US IN PARTICULAR.

SO and in such sort riseth the sun generally and universally, for all that it giveth light to every one in particular that will seek the benefit of it. O clear Sun of Justice, who art born, as a Prophet saith,* for all those that fear Thy holy name, the brightness of the glory and figure of the substance of the Father.† The clearness of eternal light, and glass without spot,‡ which vouchsafest so to come down from Heaven to earth, and being born of the Virgin Mary, to die generally for us all in such sort that Thou hast redeemed every one in particular, and so died for me as though there were no other man in the world but myself only. Loving all, Thou hast loved me in particular, for spiritual love is then most particular unto one when it is common unto all, neither is it any whit diminished in that many are partakers of it, the fruit whereof is one, and is wholly found in every man.

Thou lovest me so particularly, O Lord, that Thou lovest nothing without me, and Thou art after such a sort in every particular man as though Thou wert not universally in all, and Thou couldst not bear any greater affection of love to any one in particular if Thou lovedst but one, and no more than now Thou dost, imparting Thyself to all. For to love many, and to do good unto many, doth derogate nothing from the particular and singular love that Thou bearest me,

* Malach. iv. 2. † Heb. i. 3. ‡ Wisdom vii. 26.

for amongst all Thou lovest me, and lovest nothing without me. And therefore fear not, my soul, that the mind of Thy Lord will be distracted by loving many, and that by these means He loveth the less any one in particular. Although it seem unto thee that He be parted and divided amongst all, loving all men entirely, He loveth every particular man as though he alone were His beloved.

No man ought to love anything entirely but Thee alone, our only Lord and God. Neither can any man love all entirely, but only Thee. We ought all to love alike, and all one, because we love all one, that we may be made all one thing with the love of Him Who is all one to all. This love is one, and the same to every one, and is not particular to any; it is alone, but not solitary, it is imparted to many, but not divided, it is common and particular, it is not by imparting diminished, nor weareth by using, nor waxeth old by time, it is old and new, delectable to the affection, and sweet in experience, in fruit eternal, and full of pleasantness, it filleth and refresheth, but never causeth loathsomeness.

Our Lord loveth all in common, and every man in particular. Thou hast provided, O Lord, that I should have nothing whereof I should boast and glory in particular, for look, what Thou hast given unto me alone hath been made common by love. The light of the sun, the air and elements, are common goods. The special benefits that are not given unto all, but to some only, are faith, wisdom, knowledge, and such like, and singular good things, as those that are given to some one in particular, as the Primacy of the

Church to St. Peter, the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles unto St. Paul, and to St. John the Evangelist the singular privilege of love. I consider, therefore, my God, what I have received of Thee in common with others, what I have received of Thee more particularly with some others, and what things Thou hast given unto myself only. I love Thee generally with all, because Thou hast made me partaker of the benefits universally bestowed on all, and I love Thee more than many do, because Thou hast given me many singular gifts that Thou hast not given to many. There are many that have not been so much beloved, nor received so many benefits as I. I presume not of the goods that I have, neither cease I to give thanks for these that I have, for to this end, O Lord, Thou hast given me these goods, that I might always bear Thee in memory, and never forget to love Thee, for I am bound by the law of gratitude and thankfulness to love Thee all that ever I am able, seeing Thou hast loved me singularly. When I look, O Lord, on the particular care that Thou hast of me, and the infinite mercies that every hour and minute Thou showest unto me, it seemeth not but that having forgotten all other, Thou busiest Thyself about me only, and that Thou mindest nothing else but to inspire me, to call me, to cherish me, to uphold me, and continually to show me innumerable favours without ever ceasing or being weary. I have always found Thee present to aid me, ready and at hand to defend me, which way soever I turn Thou forsakest me not, whither soever I go Thou departest not from me, and in all that ever I do I

find Thee ready at hand, and Thou art my helper in all the good things that I do. And besides all these benefits that Thou hast granted unto me in particular, which dull my understanding when I well weigh and consider them, thou hast made me partaker of all other gifts that Thou hast given unto others in common, and given them also unto me, for all that Thou hast given unto others hath been for my service and profit also. For if Thou hadst created me alone in the world, and no more, where had been the pleasant conversation of men? What should I alone have done in the world? All that Thou hast created, O Lord, Thou hast done for my service and pleasure, and that I might have a pleasant and civil conversation as a sociable creature. Not only those things which serve mine own turn, but those things also which are necessary for them that do serve me, are all given for my sake and do serve me. And if it seem unto thee, my soul, that herein is not showed any particular love, seeing it is common to all, yea, and that He hath done unto many more particular favours than to thee, thou oughtest not to be troubled, although in the use of temporal things the good and the bad are in like sort and condition, for the wicked live not for their own sake, but because of the good. For as beasts were not created for their own sake, but because of man, so the wicked live not for their own sake, but for love of the good, and as the life of the wicked serveth to the profit of the good, so all things that serve the wicked are to the same effect.

It hath pleased Thee, O Lord, to give these temporal goods to the good and to the wicked, that

the good may thereby understand that Thou hast for them other greater and better gifts, whereas if Thou shouldst have given these earthly goods unto the just only, they might think that with those alone Thou wert fully paid and satisfied. The good would not think that there were better and greater goods provided for them but that they see these goods of the earth equally given to good and bad. Insomuch, O Lord, that not only these things which Thou hast created for me in particular are profitable for me, but also all men are for my commodity, and if all men be to my good, then must all things also that serve their turn be likewise for my service. The good are profitable for me to converse and keep company withal, and the wicked are commodious for my exercise and virtue. Thou hast created nothing that is not for my profit, and everything redoundeth to my commodity and service. Thou wouldst not, O Lord, permit any evil in the world but that Thou thoughtest to draw out thereof some good, and although the wicked are unto themselves hurtful and evil, yet are they to the just profitable and good. By their persecution the goodness of man is known, the virtue polished, the patience exercised, the manner reformed, and a crown prepared for him in Heaven. Wherefore, O Lord, Thou hast created both the good and the evil, and all things else besides that Thy divine hands have framed for my profit, and Thou lovest so generally all, that Thou hast loved me in particular in those benefits that Thou hast bestowed upon others; whereby I see myself on every side so environed with innumerable benefits. And what shall I render unto Thee, my

God, for so many gifts? What satisfaction shall I be able to make for such exceeding great favours as I have received at Thy hands? Thou commandest me to love, and therewithal Thou art contented. Seeing, therefore, Thou hast loved me so singularly, I will love Thee, my God, only above all others, and singularly will I love Thee alone, and other things that are in Thee for Thy sake, and only for love of Thee, to the end that all my desires, affections, and my whole will may be directed to Thy holy love only, as to mine only refuge and felicity.

SIXTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

OF THE INDISSOLUBLE KNOT OF THE LOVE OF GOD.

SO dearly hast Thou loved us, O Lord and our God, that to the end we might not be able to fly from Thee as our first father Adam did, Thou thoughtest good for to join unto Thyself our humanity that it should not be able to be separated at any time from Thee. All this is full of heavenly love, and herein are inclosed great treasures of holy consideration. For better understanding hereof, my soul, thou must know that the nature of man was very near unto God in friendship, but through sin was cast off. Now what did this our true lover then? He joined unto Himself in unity of person and individual nature a soul and body of mankind and tied it unto Him with an indissoluble knot so that it can never be separated from God; now

can human nature no more fly from God; now is His divine love sure of our company. In this blessed union man received all that ever God was able to give him, as well of grace as of honour and majesty. All that ever have been justified besides have come to that honour and dignity by the glory of our Redeemer, Who by the superabundance of His grace sendeth down upon His whole body, which is the Church, all the gifts which we have or hope for. Blessed be Thou, O Lord, for evermore, seeing that Thou hast desired to bestow on us the gift of Thy grace and highest good of Thy glory, that Thou wouldst give it by means and merit of Him that is of our own being and nature. Thou mightest well of Thyself have enriched us of Thy treasure, insomuch that unto Thee only we should have owed all our treasures of grace and glory, and Thou wouldst not. But to honour and magnify us Thou wouldst have one of our own stock and nature so rich, that He might with His riches be able to give us all the inheritance and fruits of everlasting salvation. And this He ordained vouchsafing to become Man Himself, a thing, no doubt, most convenient, that seeing all men perished by means of one, so there might be one other that might redeem and restore us, and impart unto us His heavenly riches. And Thou wouldst not do us this favour, O Lord, by means of any of Thine Angels, that we might be bound to none of them as to our Redeemer, but only to Him that was God and Man.

This meant Thy holy Apostle when he said, "Not to Angels hath God made subject the world to come."*

* Heb. ii. 5.

This is a sovereign love of our God and Lord of my soul, and a fire of most excellent charity. Woe unto him that considereth not this work of our love, as the Prophet Isaias crieth, and woe unto him that considereth not of it in the midst of the fire of Thy divine charity. Woe unto him that approacheth not as Moses did to contemplate those flames of fire which issue out of His heavenly breast and set the whole mountain a-fire.* Enter, therefore, my soul, into this furnace; enter, and thou shalt be enkindled in the fire of holy love, and consider well upon what our Lord setteth His affections, seeing that for desire to come and visit thee, and to give thee His celestial benefits, He forsook the company of Angels and came down upon earth as a stranger. I will, from henceforth, marvel no more at any other means that Thy great love seeketh out to work my salvation, seeing that the means and Mediator between us and Thy Divine Majesty is Thy only-begotten Son in His own divine nature and our human nature. I will marvel no more that out of this rock, for so calleth Thy Apostle our Lord Jesus Christ, flow forth mighty rivers in the desert for all Thy people to drink of.† O my God, how doth Thy love environ and compass me on every side, and yet know I not what it is to love Thee. How am I become thus insensible, knowing that Thou lovest me so fervently, and seeing how much Thou hast done for me, wherefore doth the vanity of the world draw me after it, fettered in the chains of false and deceitful love, rather than that true and excellent love wherewith Thou, my God and Lord, hast loved me?

* Exodus iii. 3; xix. 18. † Numbers xx. 11; 1 Cor. x. 4.

Wherefore doth the wickedness of the creature more allure me than the goodness of the Creator, and wherefore do I rather love my own vileness and miseries than the love and goodwill of my Redeemer?

Oh, how much hast Thou loved man, my Lord, seeing Thou hast not only vouchsafed to die for him, but to come down from Heaven to visit him, and to be with him with such gentleness, for Thy delight is to be amongst the children of men. What hath this same man, O my God, that he is so much beloved of Thee? "What is man that Thou so magnifiest him, and settest him so near to Thy heart?"* Thou exaltest him and honourest him with Thy grace, and hast Thine eyes so set upon him and Thy heart so settled within his heart that Thou hast given unto his human nature a throne of glory above all the companies of Angels. Indeed, there is not in man anything worthy the least of all these favours, but we are freely without any desert of ours thus perfectly beloved of Thee. Wherefore, O my God, dost Thou not command us to die every day for Thee and for Thy honour, seeing that Thou, O Lord and my Redeemer, being God as Thou art, of Thy infinite love diedst for us upon the Cross? What can I possibly do in Thy service, or with what force of charity can I employ myself to love Thee wherein I find not myself vanquished and overcome in Thy love? Let my heart be troubled within me; let my soul blush for shame; let me not presume to lift up mine eyes towards Heaven, the worthy habitation of my God; let my tongue be tied and glued to the palate of my mouth;† seeing that I am so ungrateful

* Job vii. 17. † Psalm cxxxvi. 6.

to so good a God Who loveth me so much and wisheth me so well. The requital wherewith I have satisfied this great debt of love that I owe Thee is that night and day I have offended so good a God and Lord. Seeing, O most merciful King of Heaven, that with such wonderful and marvellous love Thou lovedst me, let mine eyes yield forth fountains of tears, and let my heart never cease groaning, seeing that even after my knowledge of my salvation I have set so light by it, and have fondly changed the most perfect truth for falsehood and vanity of present transitory things.

In loving us, O Lord, Thou hast given us all the goods that we have, without which we had been poor and miserable; and we in loving Thy divine goodness add no one good thing unto Thee, for "Thou art my God and hast no need of our goods."* For if it be true, as it is most true and as our Saviour Himself confesseth, that Thou hast no need of the goods of the Soul of Thy only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, which are many and more excellent than all the goods of Heaven and earth jointly, how much less need hast Thou then of the goods and services of Angels and of men, which are less by a great deal. Delay not then, my soul, to love Him that hath so dearly loved thee; and if thou be of so hard a nature that thou thinkest it a pain to love thy God with all thy heart above all things, when thou hast once begun to love Him thou wilt think it a more painful and hard matter to leave loving; and having tasted of the sweet conversation of thy Lord, whereas thou thoughtest it at the beginning troublesome to leave thy self-love, thou wilt now hold it more

* Psalm xv. 2.

painful to forsake the love of thy God. The Scripture saith that Thy Spirit, O Lord, is sweet, and more sweet than honey.* Behold what the Apostle saith, "That neither eyes have seen, nor ears have heard, neither hath it ascended into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him."†

Thou hast prepared, O Lord, these inestimable benefits of Thy glory that they may be made drunk with the fatness and plenty of Thy house, according to that which the Psalmist singeth, "As a river of delights will I enter in at his mouth;" Thou hast prepared on the mount of Thy eternity a great banquet of very dainty and delicate meats; Thou hast prepared that they may enter into the joy of our Lord. What thing can there be more high than this, what thing more great and excellent can be thought or imagined; and therefore seeing that Thou, O Lord, hast loved me so strongly with such an indissoluble knot that can never be untied, nor the bands broken, and with a firm and faithful love so fervently, it is meet and great reason that I also love Thee with like perseverance and constancy, for so firm a love as this with firm love ought to be paid and answered.

* Ecclus. xxiv. 27. † 1 Cor. ii. 9. ‡ Psalm xxxv. 9.

SIXTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

HOW THE LOVE OF GOD IS THE BOND OF PERFECTION.

LOVE hath the power and virtue to join and transform. It is like unto fire, which joineth with iron and entereth in at the pores and veins thereof until it transformeth it into itself, although there remain the true substance of the iron. The like is love, which is joined in such sort to those that it loveth that it transformeth them into it. We find this most profoundly verified in Thee, our God and our Lord, for Thy love hath joined Thee to that which Thou lovest exceedingly, without any detriment to Thy Divinity, and without consuming of our humanity, approaching so nigh unto this most divine fire of which the Scripture saith, "God is a consuming fire."

This love that Thou hast borne us is so great that it was able to make such a wonderful and celestial union as is that between Thee and man, and yet was that most sacred Humanity in such sort united unto Thee, that all other men in particular were not joined unto Thee in unity of person, although we receive thereby much honour and dignity, and so much, that hereupon Thou callest Thyself the second Adam, because, by the participation that Thou hast of our nature Thou hast so enriched all sufficiently with honour and glory as in Adam we were all condemned; insomuch, O Lord, that Thou hast dwelled in all by assuming of one only, and by Thee being made man of our nature and of the same flesh and bones and

reasonable soul that we are that sovereign good which hath ensued unto us, as it is written: "I have said ye are gods and the children of the Most High."* That same humanity of ours being exalted in Thee, hath merited that we all may ascend to the like spiritual union with Thee, that the like reason of love may be found likewise in us, though not in the same degree as it is in Thee, in Whom there is a real union of the Humanity with the Person and Subject of the Divine Word. For to join us, O Lord, unto Thee, which is the end of our love, Thou hast appointed very forcible and excellent means, to wit, seven Sacraments full of fruit and grace.

Behold then, therefore, now my soul, into what a garden thou art entered, full of sweet flowers and red roses moistened with the dew of heaven, planted within that inclosed orchard, which is the Church which the spouse so much praiseth in the Canticles. Gather a nosegay and keep it in thy bosom. Behold, if Thou be thirsty, to what a fountain of all graces and mercies thou art arrived, that thou mayest drink thy fill, and hearken unto a holy Prophet who saith, "All ye that are thirsty come unto the waters, and ye that have no money buy and eat."† Behold, if thou be hungry, to what a table art thou invited, where meat is thy God and the drink His most precious Blood, and give ear unto the wisdom that saith, "Come and eat My bread, and drink the wine that is mingled for you."‡ Behold, though it seem a desert, it is full of manna from Heaven, full of all delights, sweet savour of grace and pleasant taste of glory.

* Psalm lxxxi. 6. † Isaias lv. 1. ‡ Prov. ix. 5.

Insomuch as it is agreeable, O Lord, to Thy divine providence to provide for every one according to the condition of his nature, and seeing we receive no knowledge of anything in our souls but by means of our outward senses, it was expedient that we should be instructed in the divine mysteries by means of these outward signs, and so Thou communicatest Thy grace unto us by means of the Sacraments which Thou hast ordained, which are sensible and effectual signs of Thy grace. And forasmuch as forsaking Thy Divine Majesty we became subject to the elements of the world, it was need that the same medicine should be a remedy for our disease, to wit, that by the commandment of God we should be subject to these elements, and by their means tame our pride under the yoke of faith.

It was also convenient that Christian religion should never be idle, and therefore it was reason that we should daily exercise ourselves in the noble ceremonies of the Sacraments. These are those most excellent means that Thy eternal wisdom hath ordained and established, that by means of these most high Sacraments, as it were with seven cords of love, Thou mightest bind our souls unto Thee with a strong band of perfection in everlasting charity. And as Thou hast joined unto Thee our human nature with an indissoluble knot of union, moved thereunto by the only charity and infinite love that Thou bearest us, so wilt Thou also join our souls unto Thee by charity, which, as the holy Apostle saith, "is the bond of perfection."* Love is a virtue that joineth together

* Colos. iii. 14.

the beloved, and so did it in the mystery of Thy holy Incarnation, wherein our humanity was joined unto Thee in unity of person in such an excellent manner, that in Thee being made Man the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth essentially,* not divided and without all mixture.

This effect is, after a sort, found also in the holy love that the just bear unto Thee, for that it joineth them unto Thee spiritually, not drawing Thee down again from Heaven to earth, as then Thou camest, but carrying them up thither and there joining them unto Thee. "He that cleaveth unto our Lord by love," saith the Scripture, "is made one spirit."† As fire driveth forth the moisture of wood with its heat, and never ceaseth until it hath transformed it into itself, so the love of God, with its heat and virtue, expelleth the moisture of our concupiscence and sin, and never resteth, unless we let and hinder it, until it hath transformed us into Thee and maketh us like God, uniting us unto Thee; insomuch that, without working any confusion or composition or augmentation in Thee, it maketh us one spirit with Thee. Look, what difference, therefore, there is in those first dispositions that the fire causeth in the wood, expelling the contraries and making fit place wherein to receive the perfect form of fire, the self-same difference there is between these two kinds of union that love maketh. Surely, O Lord, all the love that a creature beareth Thee here on earth, is like a heat that disposeth and prepareth it, that the same lively burning charity may enter wherein it shall burn hereafter, when it is joined

* Colos. ii. 9. † 1 Cor. vi. 17.

to that supersubstantial which art Thou, my God, for so the Scripture calleth Thee.

What else is love but a life that joineth together two things, or seeketh at least to join them together, to wit, the lover and the beloved. My soul is no more perfectly in the body where it liveth than where it loveth, unless some haply would say that it is more perfectly in the place where it is tied as in a prison, than where with pleasure it may fly where it liketh at ease. Surely, "Where our treasure is there is our heart,"* and seeing Thou, O Lord, art the treasure of those who love Thee, the good have their heart on Thee and they cleave and stick fast unto Thee, they are joined with Thee even whilst they live here on earth, and many times we see such as fervently love Thee that cleave unto Thee with affection and desire. They remain so insensible of any other earthly thing, that being as men in an ecstasy, if one open their eyes they cannot see if one strike them, they feel nothing, are not hungry, and walking many miles know not of it, and returning afterwards to the world, have their hearts replenished with Thy heavenly riches and graces. Thy holy love is of such force that it causeth not only this union, that man living here on earth may dwell with Thee and may talk and consider with Thy Divine Majesty, but also joineth him with his beloved, without prejudice or hurt to the nature of the one or the other, and extoleth man who was earthly to a divine nature, and extolleth him to Thy glory and immortality, and transformeth him into Thee. In such sort doth love work this union with Thee whilst we

* Matt. vi. 21.

live here on earth, that even now already doth the soul, yea, and the body, begin to taste the pleasantness and sweetness whereto it is to come. "As the hart desireth the fountains of waters, so longeth my soul after Thee, my God,"* and in this union of love and earnest desires "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God."† My heart hath felt the spiritual touch that Thou gavest her, and was replenished with joy, as true lovers rejoice at their meetings. Who is able to express or declare the great delight and contentment that Thou givest to my soul, seeing that even to the body also it imparteth her joy and pleasure. Blessed is the people that knoweth the joy and rejoicing that is at this spiritual union with Thee. Through this union by love and affection the soul heareth the voice of her spouse and beloved, and becometh as soft as wax. "So soon as my Beloved spake unto me, my soul waxed soft and melted with chaste love."§

* Psalm xli. 2. † Psalm lxxxiii. 3. ‡ Cant. v. 6.

SIXTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

OF THE BENEFITS THAT PROCEED OF THIS BOND OF LOVE.

LOVE being of so great power and force that it joineth the beloved one with another, it must needs follow that they participate of the good the one of the other. Who is able to declare, O Lord, the riches that Thou givest unto my soul when it is fastened unto Thee with this bond and rope of holy love? I may in a sort express the spiritual delights that my soul tasteth, being united unto Thee, by making a similitude or comparison of the benefits that my body enjoyeth by the union and presence of my soul (wherein although there be little likeness yet is there great difference), and this union with Thee by many means and degrees more excellent. I see my body much enriched when I see the soul is united unto it, the eyes enjoy thereby the pleasure to behold and see the clearness and light of the heavens, of the sun, and moon, and stars, the green meadows and flourishing fields; the taste, so delighted with variety of dainty meats and drinks; the hearing, with sweet sounds of music, and so of the rest of the senses. The body liveth, groweth, and enjoyeth life by presence of the soul, by power whereof it walketh, goeth, and liveth. And if, then, the soul bring so much good to the body by being joined unto it, how far greater heavenly riches and spiritual treasures shall my soul receive by being united unto Thee by the bond of love? Surely in this blessed communication

that love maketh between my soul and Thee, my God, it receiveth innumerable gifts; and a great part of these goods with such security, if it persevere in Thy holy love, as it shall enjoy Thee hereafter in Heaven, being exalted to the fruition of Thy glorious sight. Thou shalt give unto my soul such a clear sight, that it shall be able to behold Thy divinity, and enjoy it proportionably to the love that it beareth. In this spiritual union that love maketh, the soul cometh to taste of sweetness at the well-head, and shall afterwards drink of the flowing river of Thy heavenly delights. And if I will yet proceed further in this consideration, and stay upon this former example, I shall find that there is here great cause and matter to meditate upon Thy most excellent love. I see O Lord, that the soul doth not only participate her riches to the body whereto it is joined, but also, after it is united, receiveth delights and pleasures with it.

O my God, sovereign goodness, infinite salvation, and eternal fountain of glory that never endeth, should I haply err much if I said that in this holy union between Thee and our souls there is a participation and communicating of goods from Thee to the other? I see well, O my God, that man hath not in him whereby to yield Thee any mirth or recreation, as likewise the body of man hath not to give unto the soul before it be joined unto it; but I know withal that Holy Scripture saith of Thy divine clemency, that "Thy delights are to dwell with the children of men."* As the delights of our soul are to have what is noble and giveth life to the body, and so to enjoy

* Prov. viii. 31.

the gifts that it giveth it; so is it to be understood that Thy delights are to dwell with the children of men, that is, to give them life, and grace, and beauty of virtues; and to delight in them, is that Thou rejoicest to have done this for them.

There is not in me anything whereby to delight Thee; but Thou, O Lord, plantest in my soul the spiritual gardens, and waterest them with the water of Thy grace, for to recreate and take Thy pleasure in them. All this ensueth by uniting of our soul unto Thee by true love, and so by approaching unto this fire it participateth of the heat of Thy infinite charity and goodness, and being nigh unto such inestimable riches, her poverty is relieved, her nakedness clothed, and she wholly deified and transformed into this glory of infinite majesty and unchangeable beauty. Blessed be Thou, O Lord, for evermore, seeing Thou hast given us here on earth so great love that we be truly united unto Thee by love, and live in Thee, and Thou in us. "He that loveth me," saith Christ, "I will love him, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and dwell in him."* When I hear this word "dwelling," I consider of it as of that which my soul causeth in my body when it is joined unto it; not that Thou, O Lord and our God, art the force of our body and givest it life as the soul doth when it is in it, but because Thou dwellest truly in those that love Thee, being spiritually united unto them. As the body, by the presence of the soul, is beautiful, and all the beauty that it hath it receiveth by the assistance thereof; so all the beauty, O Lord, of the soul

* St. John xiv. 23.

dependeth of Thy presence, through which it is fair as the moon, elect as the sun, and terrible and fearful to the enemies as a squadron well set in array.* What beauty and perfection must the soul needs have which containeth Him within it Who is the fountain of beauty and sun of all perfection? How can she choose but gain infinite treasures, having Thee within her? And what manner of thing doth the body remain without the soul, when it is departed from it, but covered with filthiness, horrible, pale, without conversation or life? O life of my soul and God of my heart, my soul, by Thy absence, is nothing else but a bottomless pit of filthiness and hellish confusion, the darkness of Egypt, a sea of miseries, and a receptacle of all the evil in the world. And as Thy presence is life, mirth, beauty, and all delight and honour, so Thy absence is death, sadness, loathsomeness, and all torment and shame unto it. "All good things jointly have come unto me by Thy coming, and infinite honesty by Thy hands."† By Thy presence my soul hath power and virtue to resist all evils, and without it she is overcome of any evil, and by any little occasion is overthrown and cast down. Whereupon cometh it that Thy holy love is so weak and cold in our hearts? Whereupon cometh the feebleness of our body? Either for want of meat, or else that the stomach cannot retain and digest the meat that it receiveth. And hereupon it proceedeth that we love Thee so faintly, O Lord, and so easily we fall from Thy charity, because we eat not, or if we eat, do presently vomit it up again, and lift not up our

* Cant. vi. 3. † Wisdom vii. 11.

consideration to the contemplation of Thy infinite goodness. We look not upon Thy holy love and noble works, or if sometimes we meditate upon them, the cares of the world, the desires of the flesh, and pride of this life, do presently choke and quench the little sparkle of fire which was kindled in our hearts.*

Oh, what celestial joy do I find in Thee, O Lord, when I behold how excellently Thou hast loved, and how much Thou hast esteemed me? This joy shall be so sweet and pleasant, that although the taste thereof pass away as that blessed time flitteth wherein my soul was admitted, there remaineth afterwards such a lively memory thereof, that it awaketh the heart to return to seek this gate, and encourageth and strengtheneth it to persevere in knocking and calling.

* 1 St. John ii. 15.

SEVENTIETH MEDITATION.

HOW THE LOVE OF GOD IS DELECTABLE AND PLEASANT.

"OH, how great, O Lord, is the multitude of Thy sweetness that Thou hast hidden and laid up for those that fear Thee."* I should do injury to the spiritual tastes and delights that Thou gavest to my soul if I should go about to express them in words, for no tongue is able to declare the least of them all. "Oh, how sweet is Thy Spirit, O Lord, in us."† "The mountains distilled sweetness, and the hill flowed milk."‡ This, Thy holy love, O Lord, doth comfort the spirit and delighteth the taste, recreateth the soul, and the sweetness and pleasantness doth so exceed all things created, that it maketh a man forget all that ever can any ways give contentment upon earth. Oh, how great vanity and madness is that of them that love the abominable filthiness of sensual delights, and for which they have forsaken the heavenly pleasures and Thy divine consolations. O miserable and most unhappy creatures, who forsake the manna of Heaven for the garlic and onions of Egypt.§ I know not how it is possible, O Lord, for these carnal men to leave Thee, the fountain of living waters,|| knowing the sweetness of Thy holy love, and to take pleasure in the stinking filthiness of their loathsome delights. They delight in their wicked vanities because they have not experience how sweet

* Psalm xxx. 20. † Wisdom xii. 1. ‡ Joel iii. 18.
§ Numb. xi. 5. || Jer. ii. 13.

Thou art, and how pleasant Thy conversation. One thing that maketh me to marvel much at the sin of King David is, that he continued so long time in the filthiness of his sin, having tried and had experience before his fall how sweet and delectable Thy divine consolation is. It is no marvel if gross and homely meats taste and savour well in the mouth of a country clown that hath been hardly and rudely brought up, because he hath been always used to such meats, and never tasted of the delicate meats that are served at Princes' tables; but if a Prince, or son of some great King, being brought up very daintily, should taste of the rude and vile meats that rustical shepherds use, and refuse for them the delicate food of his father's table, it were a thing greatly to be wondered at. O sweetness of my life, dainty food and most sumptuously furnished table of my God, I marvel not that carnal and worldly men, that have spent their whole life in serving their appetites, do take pleasure in the vile and gross meats wherein they have lived; but it maketh me much to wonder that such a spiritual man as David was, unto whom Thou hadst so much communicated Thyself, and who had tasted so much of Thy heavenly delights, could find any taste in such abominable and detestable filthiness. I have gotten, like another Jonathan, a little honey with the top of the rod.* I tasted of it, and mine eyes were lightened with that spark of knowledge that Thou hast put in me. I have attained to know a little how sweet Thou art, O Lord, and after I had once tasted of Thy conversation, I opened my eyes to behold Thy

* 1 Kings xiv. 27.

exceeding great sweetness, and the bitterness of all worldly conversation.

When Rebecca saw the sights that were in Abraham's house, she presently loathed and hated her own country and parents.* Wherefore, O Lord, do men forsake Thy holy love for love of the world? Wherefore, O my God, do they take delight in the meats of this world, and esteem the bitterness and gall of sensual pleasures as sweet and pleasant? Wherefore come they not to the knowledge how sweet, O Lord, Thy spirit is, and what pleasantness is in Thy most excellent conversation? O Lord, I desire and beseech Thee that Thou rather cast me into everlasting flames of hell fire, than that Thou suffer me to forsake Thee, my God, Who art the clear fountain, infinite beauty, and set my love upon the loathsome filthiness of creatures. What a thing is this that we should offer Thee so great injury, having loved us so dearly, as to set our affection upon the present delight and pleasures of this world. Oh, that one had all the tongues of Angels, that he might be able to inveigh against this our exceeding great wickedness!

How many are there who, forsaking Thy singular beauty, and the excellent exceeding love that Thou bearest us, have ignominiously given over themselves to the desires and passions of their own heart, and become slaves of their own sensuality.† These cursed creatures do love the filthiness of sensuality, setting light of Thy infinite beauty, and they love their present delights which slip out of their hands and cannot be held fast, little esteeming those most perfect

* Gen. xxiv. 58. † Rom. i. 24.

riches and joys that are in Thy holy love which can never end. They blindly love the thing that is bitter, and that for which they shall shortly be punished, holding bitter for sweet and darkness for light.* O Lord, and who were able to open the eyes of these blind gazers, and to make them understand their great wickedness. This is that great complaint which Thy holy Prophet Jeremias maketh, saying, "Let the heavens be astonished, and let their gates be sad and mourn for grief, for My people have committed two great sins, they have forsaken and despised Me, the fountain of lively waters, and have digged for themselves and their pleasures certain leaking pits that cannot hold the water that cometh into them."† This contempt, O Lord, did greatly grieve Thee, seeing that Thou requirest the heavens to put on mourning weeds, which Thou hast created with such exceeding beauty and brightness, and makest them to lament and bewail so great a wickedness as is this, to forsake the continual flowing fountains of most excellent sweetness for the vain delights and bitter torments of sensuality, which are as stinking pits that can hold no water, and the lovers thereof run after this vanity and yet can never catch nor come to the sight of it.

Confess it then, my soul, deny it not, it is reason thou shouldst be convinced by truth. When wert thou ever able to hold fast one of thy joys but that it fled from thee? Thou didst ever receive more pain in desiring it and greater grief in losing it, than thou hast pleasure in enjoying it. Seest thou not that the face of thy delights is sad, abominable and filthy?

* Isaias v. 20. † Jer. ii. 12, 13.

Hear the spouse in the Canticles, and thou shalt be delivered from the great wickedness wherewith thou art blinded. "My Spouse is as an apple tree amongst the trees of the mountains."* The trees of the mountains are briers, oaks, beeches, and willows, which either bear no fruit at all, or if some of them do bear fruit it is but acorns for hogs and no pleasant meat for men. All these temporal delights are like thistles, briers, and thorns. Although thou possess a mountain of the desires of thine appetites, thou shalt find therein neither pleasure nor delight; because thou refusest the dainty apple tree that is sweet in smell, pleasant in taste, and laden with fruit, in leaving and forsaking the love of God, more sweet and pure than the heavens.

Oh, what extreme folly and madness is that of those, my Lord, who in their hunger and want will not stretch out their hand to the apple tree, but go seeking fruit among thorns. Never suffer me, O Lord, in the hunger that I shall have after delights, to forsake the most pleasant fruit of Thy holy love, and to go seek in mine own sensuality where I shall gather nothing else but corruption. Look, "What a man soweth that shall he reap; he that soweth in the field of the flesh shall reap corruption, and he that soweth in the spirit shall reap life everlasting."† Exceeding great, surely, is Thy love, O Lord, seeing Thou esteemest us so much that Thou sayest Thy delight is to dwell with the children of men. And what great wickedness is this of mine, then, that I have not my whole delight in Thee, my God, seeing that Thou takest Thy pleasure

* Cant. ii. 3. † Gal. vi. 8.

in me? Thou, Who art an immortal and glorious God, sayest that Thou takest Thy delight in a corruptible and mortal man; and dwelling in the throne of majesty and glory of all pleasure and contentments, Thou descendest into the heart of man, in the vale of tears and darkness; and yet man doth make no more account of all this, and taketh no delight in Thee nor in Thy holy love.

Woe is me that I speak against myself and my great folly in that forsaking Thee, Who art infinite beauty and glory, I seek, with great injury unto Thee, the false delights of the world, and for all the bitterness that I find therein cannot beware. Turn, O Lord, unto Thee my wandering will, that I may not only love Thee as I am bound to do, but also with a fervent zeal may amend my former errors and redeem the time that I have lost. Woe unto the world and to all the lovers thereof, who refuse to love such a God, Who so dearly loveth us and hath done so much for us. Unto Thee only, our God and our Lord, we ought for to give our true love, for we are not debtors unto flesh and blood that we should pay it any part of the delights that it giveth us, but rather it is in our debt for the sins that it causeth us to commit. Make an end of these vanities, my soul, return to thy judgment and understanding and behold how great love thou owest unto thy God, and how securely and directly thou walkest unto life everlasting by the way of the love of thy God.

Hear the Wise Man, who crieth out aloud, reprehending and calling them fools and children* without

* Prov. i. 22.

judgment, who love those things that so much do hurt us; and hear the living God, Who commandeth thee to love Him with all thy heart and with all thy strength and power, and behold how many things bind thee unto it and how glorious thy reward shall be.

SEVENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

HOW THE LOVE OF GOD IS THE GIFT OF HEAVEN.

THY holy love is a sovereign and most excellent gift that descendeth from Heaven, as "a very good and perfect gift from the Father of lights, with Whom is no transmutation nor shadowing of alteration,"* and He infuseth it into our souls, and giveth it to all that will have it. This is greatest of all gifts, a gift upon gifts which is given to none but friends, and Himself is the gift of love, and those that love Me, saith He, I do love.† O precious pearl, which whoso findeth selleth all that he hath to buy it!‡ O most excellent treasure, which whoso possesseth, although he want all things besides, yet is he rich; as he that wanteth it is poor, although he have all things else abundantly. Verily, although a man should give all that he hath for love, he need not think much of it, for "Blessed is he, O Lord, whom Thou enrichest with Thy holy love."§ This is that several and private fountain wherein no strange thing hath any part or

* St. James i. 17. † Prov. viii. 17. ‡ St. Matt. xiii. 46.
§ Psalm xciii. 12.

portion.* This is that wedding garment which whoso hath not on shall be bound hand and foot and thrown into utter darkness.† This is the veil that St. Peter saith covereth the multitude of sins.‡ This is the holy unction that teacheth us all things.§ This is the fire that God came to cast on the earth, and which He would to be kindled of Almighty God. A Prophet saith, "He sent fire into my bones,"‖ and taught me. This fire is sent from Heaven, and issueth not out of the earth, and it is the sovereign gift of God. And therefore, O good Jesu, seeing Thou hast commanded me to love Thee, give me the means, O Lord, that I may love Thee, give me power to do that Thou commandest me, and command me whatsoever it shall please Thee; for although it be unto me a thing very delectable and pleasant to love Thee, my Lord, yet is Thy holy love above my strength, above my power, and above my nature. And this love that Thou seekest in me is supernatural, which is to be possessed through Thy gift and our free will; and yet have I not for all that any excuse to allege for not loving Thee, for to him that seeketh and desireth Thy love Thou never deniest it, and to all that ask Thou dost liberally give it. I cannot see without light, and yet if I see not at noon day by reason that I wink, the fault is in myself, and not in the sun which lighteneth all things. The like, O Lord, is Thy holy love, which is a sovereign gift that lighteneth all men, and Thou invitest all unto it, and deniest it unto none but those that shut their eyes of their free will, and will not

* Cant. iv. 12. † St. Matt. xxii. 13. ‡ 1 St. Peter iv. 8.
§ 1 St. John ii. 20. ‖ Jer. xx. 9.

receive it. Who will give me the grace that, despising and forsaking all other things, I may seek this precious pearl only, and labour to get this alone with all my force and my whole power. O mortal men, O crooked souls, bound and bended to these transitory vain trifles, and altogether empty of these heavenly things, wherefore do you labour so much to obtain this frail, transitory and vain trifle, and set so light by this precious pearl that is of value inestimable? How much do men labour, how do they toil and sweat, what pains do they take to get a little knowledge that is soon lost! Oh, that they would take as great pains to seek this Thy gift of love, which how far greater it is than knowledge, the latter day shall manifestly declare.* At that latter Day of Judgment, when Thou shalt come, as a Prophet saith, with lighted torches to search and examine Jerusalem,† it shall be a great deal better for us to have loved Thee than to have disputed in very subtle and deep questions, and it shall be more worth to have Thy love than to be skilful in all the sciences in the world without it. And seeing, therefore, it importeth me so much to love, that no less matter than the life of my soul and my salvation dependeth thereon, wherefore do I not set my whole study and care in loving Thee only, and requesting of Thee night and day with tears and sighs this sovereign gift of Thy heavenly love, casting off all other business, which at giving up of my account in the Day of Judgment shall nothing avail me. Spend thou, therefore, O my soul, the days of this short life in continual cries and petitions. Let thy heart be poured out like

* 1 Cor. iv. 5. † Soph. i. 12.

water before the throne of that Divine Majesty;* and humbly beseech Him to give thee this heavenly gift of holy love, for although it be given to none but those that do ask it, yet is it denied to none that demand it, seeing He inviteth thereto those that neither seek nor demand it. Nicodemus went to see Thee, O our Saviour, and without answering anything to the prayers that he gave Thee, Thou presently toldest him what he must do to be saved before he demanded it, inviting him with Thy holy love and goods of glory. I see well, O Lord, that Thou hast Thy loving Heart opened for my help and remedy, and that Thou hast these liberal hands stretched abroad for to give me Thy holy love, and that Thou desirest nothing more than to see in me my heart empty and void of worldly love, to the intent that false love giving place unto true love, Thou mightest infuse into it Thy grace, for that both these two contrary loves cannot be jointly together; and wherefore then, O Lord, shall I not cast out of my soul all earthly love that Thy divine and heavenly love may reign in it? All things were created to love and serve Thee, and seeing man is all creatures, for that he participateth of them all, when he loveth Thee not he preventeth the order of nature and causeth that creatures obtain not their end; for he, O Lord, ought to pay Thee the debt of love for himself and for them, seeing Thou hast made him lord over them, and hast created them all for his service and profit. And therefore I will love Thee, O Lord, all that ever I am able, though not as Thou deservest, nor with like perfection as the Saints love Thee after this life in Heaven. Isaias saith,†

* Lament. ii. 19. † Isaias xxxi. 9.

"That Thy love is a fire in Sion and a flaming furnace in Jerusalem." We see now, as it were, in a glass in a dark sort, but then plainly and face to face. Love is here a fire with smoke, but there it shall be nothing but flame; then we shall have perfect knowledge and perfect love. It is a fire here in Sion, that is in this militant Church; but in Jerusalem, that is in the celestial glory, it shall be a flaming furnace, where nothing shall be able to quench it. There was in the Temple an altar without, whereon they burnt not all the sacrifices, for part thereof was for the Priest and part was burnt; but on the altar within, which was the Sancta Sanctorum, all the incense was burnt. So long as we are here in this life, in this world and frail flesh, all is not purely and sincerely Thy love that we have, for we give part to creatures and part unto Thee; but there in Thy celestial Jerusalem above, which is free and our mother, our love shall be a flaming furnace where our souls shall burn in fire of love with Thee and reign in Thy Kingdom for evermore. I will now love Thee, O Lord, as I am able, which must be by means of the power and force that Thou shalt give me to love, by sending me from Heaven this sovereign gift of Thy holy love.

Break off, therefore, O my soul, in earnest with the world, burst the chains of self-love wherewith Thou art tied, and behold the liberality of this Lord, and humbly beseech Him to send Thee this gift from Heaven, as in times past He sent it upon His holy Apostles in flames of fire. It is the gift of God and a benefit that He sendeth from Heaven; ask thou this holy love as thou oughtest to ask it, and it shall not be denied thee.

SEVENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

HOW THE HEAVENLY GIFT OF LOVE IS GOTTEN AND PRESERVED.

IMAGINE not, my soul, that divine love can be gotten by any human study, diligence or care. It is the gift of God, and a grace above all graces, and He giveth it graciously gratis. It is gotten with tears and petitions, and not by any force of ours, it is not taught but infused, it is not learned but received by grace from above, and in truth those that seek it find it, but not so much for care and diligence of him that seeketh as for the grace of Him that giveth, for no man can enter into the wine cellar of God unless he be brought in by the hand of God, according to that in the Canticles, "The King put me in the wine cellar, and ordained in me charity."* Let no man rashly and with presumption enter into the cellar, but let him first call humbly at the door, for it is not opened by force, but by grace unto those that sue for it. Yet are there many things, O Lord, that may help and dispose us to obtain this Thy holy love, and the first and chief of all is purity and cleanness of heart, which doth principally make us meet and capable of this supernatural and celestial gift, for sure it is that such a pure and precious liquor shall not be poured into unclean and sluttish vessels; and therefore, according to the opinion and judgment of the Prophet, we ought to brush our souls from all earthly dust, that they may receive into them so great and such a precious liquor.

* Cant. ii. 4.

"Let us cleanse our souls," saith the Apostle, "from all iniquities of the flesh and spirit, perfecting salvation in the fear of God,"* "For he that loveth cleanness of heart shall have the King for his friend."†

When Thou gavest the law to the people of Israel and house of Jacob, Thou commandedst, by the hand of Thy servant Moses, that they should wash themselves two days, and that they should be ready and clean the third day, and that they should not touch their own wives.‡ Oh, how far greater is Thy holy love than Moses' law! Of that law saith the Apostle that it brought all men to perfection,§ but this holy love is a most perfect gift, and in it consisteth Christian perfection, and it maketh those perfect that enjoy and possess it. And how then shall I be able to get and receive it? By washing my conscience with many lavers of tears, by cleansing my heart from all uncleanness and malice, and by setting my whole thoughts and desires upon the bliss of Heaven. "Create in me, O Lord, a clean heart, and confirm me with Thy principal spirit."‖ When the holy Apostles received this gift from Heaven, and that the Holy Ghost came upon them in tongues of fire,¶ they were all joined together in love and charity, and persevered in fasting and prayer. Fire entereth not if the wood lie scattered and far asunder, but it must be somewhat close and nigh together. The divine fire of Thy holy love is never found where are divisions and factions, and cometh not but to the heart that is quiet and peaceable with fastings, tears,

* 2 Cor. vii. 1. † Prov. xxii. 11. ‡ Exodus xix. 15.
§ Heb. vii. 11. ‖ Psalm l. 12. ¶ Acts ii. 3.

and prayers. My heart is disposed, my soul is made fit and espoused for a habitation of the celestial gift of Thy holy love. Let them cleanse their hearts, O Lord, that are of double minds, if they desire to be enriched with this love. Let them cleanse them not only of all sin that may defile them, but also from all noise of anguish and cares, and from all affection that may distract them, and from all dissembling and deceit, and from all wandering and unquietness of mind, and let them leave the vessel of their heart free and empty to the Spirit, humbly beseeching Him with all devotion to enter in, for He will not dwell with serpents and vipers and scorpions, and liketh not to enter into an unclean heart. And look, from whence He is driven forth with filthy inward stinking savours, thither is He hardly for the most part with much suit and fervent sighs recalled.

Thou must therefore cleanse, O my soul, the habitation of thy heart, and make it fair with desire of virtues, and deck it up with trim flowers of good affections and holy thoughts, that we may say, with the spouse, "Behold how beautiful and fair Thou art, my Beloved; our bed is flourished."* And then will He come with a good will, although He be neither called nor invited. He will come, for that it is enough that they show Him alone the flourishing bed to cause Him to come, and to draw Him on with the sweet smell of the flowers. For a sweet savour allureth Him more than fair words, cleanness more than sacrifices, and the humility of him that devoutly asketh than the importunate babbling of him that doth continually

* Cant. i. 15.

solicit. "According to the cleanness of my hands shall He give me reward, and according to the pureness of my soul shall He give me His Spirit."* Whereupon the Apostle saith, "Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double of mind."†

A careful desire also of the love of God, and continually to pray unto God for it, is of great force to make thee obtain it, as it is written, "I have opened my mouth and drawn breath."‡ The mouth of the heart is the desire which love then openeth when it is given above measure unto man; and to the negligent and careless Thou givest not, O Lord and our God, the spirit of Thy love, for Thou givest not that which is holy unto dogs, lest perhaps they tear it in pieces, nor castest pearls amongst swine, lest they tread them with their feet. And if to those that do so much desire this heavenly gift, and ask it with so great affection, this desired spirit after a long time is so hardly granted, how shall so great a good be granted unto those that are lukewarm, and which pass not of it? There is yet another preparation no less than the former for to obtain this Thy holy love, which is the mortification of sensual passions. When the King of Egypt was dead, the children of Israel wept and called unto Thy Divine Majesty, and Thou heardest their mourning, and succouredst and deliveredst them out of the bondage and captivity of Egypt.§ They called unto Thee likewise before the death of the King, for they had many years before that been persecuted

* Psalm xvii. 25. † St. James iv. 8. ‡ Psalm cxviii. 131.
§ Exod i. 23, 24.

and evil dealt with withal, but then Thou heardest their petition when the King of Egypt was dead.

If thou wilt therefore, my soul, have God to hear thy desire and to grant thy request, and to aid thee and to give thee His holy love, kill the king of darkness, for it is meet that the love of this world which reigneth in thy heart do die in thee, and that thou vanquish and subdue all thy passions. Thy Spouse, Jesus Christ, came to Israel when Herod was dead, and not before.* Kill thy wicked desires, and let not sin reign in this mortal body,† for these sensual appetites living in thee do choke the spirit of God, and, like thick clouds and moist storms, do dim and darken it, that it cannot show forth His clear light, and the less that it shineth the less must it needs burn, as the light of the sun when shadowed with clouds giveth less heat. But the clouds of our passions that do bind us being clean vanished away, the dark and obscure night presently turneth into clear and cheerful day, and the light thereof warming the heart, it burneth forth with an affection, as a pot boileth with hot water. The charitable love of our neighbours, the reading of holy books, the conversation of spiritual persons, who, with holy and pious speeches inflame the heart, with these and such like things may that sacred fire of divine love be obtained, still feeding and maintaining it with this as with wood of the mountain, that it may not decay. And because thy God and Lord would have this heavenly fire burn in thy heart, He commanded in the Old Law that upon His altar there should always be fire, which by

* St. Matt. ii. 22. † Rom. vi. 12.

the Priest was maintained and fed with wood.* So likewise, my soul, thou art to maintain this holy fire in thy breast, preserving and cherishing it with good works, tears, and prayers. This Spirit of truth is very delicate, and goeth His ways if He be offended. Wherefore, after He is once given He ought to be kept very carefully, that He may not be extinguished with temporal cares, as a little spark is wont to be quenched by casting wet and saggish wood upon it, according to that which is written, "The Spirit extinguish not,"† for as there is nothing more precious than it, so is there nothing more delicate and tender than the same, and therefore ought He with great fervour and diligence to be sought, and with great care and watchfulness to be kept when we have Him.

SEVENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

HOW WE CANNOT LOVE GOD AND THE WORLD TOGETHER.

AS the love of the world, O our God and our Lord, inflameth the heart, and carrieth it into the bottomless pit of perdition, so holy love, and this Thy heavenly fire, raiseth and lifteth it up to high and lofty things, and inflameth it in those that are eternal, and inviteth the soul unto things that never pass nor vanish, and from the depth of hell exalteth it to the top of Heaven. Every love hath its force, and no

* Lev. vi. 12. † 1 Thess. v. 19.

love is idle in the soul of the lover; it evermore carrieth the soul one way or another.

Would thou know, then, my soul, what love there is in thee? Look whither it carrieth thee, for by love thou art drawn away whither it listeth. When the love of the world bendeth thee unto earthly things, then hast thou the wings pinioned and canst not fly on high, but if thou be cleansed from the most filthy affections of this world, thou mountest with spread wings of divine love up unto Heaven. Love is never idle, and all love either ascendeth or descendeth; good love lifteth up our soul unto Thee, O Lord, and evil love presseth it down unto hell. He that is overcome with the love of earthly vanities taketh no delight in heavenly things. The soul cannot be without delight, and therefore delighteth either in high or base things, and with the greater care and study that it exerciseth itself in earthly things the less taste it hath of heavenly, and the more that it is lifted up to things on high the more it purgeth and riddeth itself of earthly love. Both these things cannot jointly and equally be loved, and therefore the Apostle St. John, knowing well that the corn of thy sovereign love cannot be sown to grow among the thorns of the love of this world, before he soweth in the hearts of men the seed of Thy divine love, first plucketh up the thorns of worldly love, saying, "Love not the world, nor those things that are in the world;" and addeth further, "For if any one love the world, the charity of God is not in him.*" Therefore two loves cannot stand together in one heart, and the corn of the love

* 1 St. John ii. 15.

of God cannot grow where are the thorns of worldly delights; and therefore it is requisite, O Lord, that I first take away the love of the world if I will have my soul enjoy Thy divine love, and so thou sayest by the Prophet Jeremias, "Behold, I have appointed thee over the Gentiles and over kingdoms, that thou mayest pluck up, beat down, scatter, build, and plant."* Thou commandest him first to pull down and afterwards to build, and Thou wilt first have him to pluck up and afterwards to plant, for there cannot be laid any sure foundation of the love of God unless the frame of worldly love be first beaten down and destroyed.

They, O Lord, that love visible things love not the invisible, and they that follow external vanities they forsake the inward riches. Thou and the earth, O Lord, cannot be loved together, for earthly love blindeth the eyes of the soul that she cannot see the excellency of Thy holy love. I cannot, O my God and my whole bliss, busy me with Thee and with myself at one time, and therefore, O Lord, take Thou some pains with my baseness to exalt it, and I will occupy myself in Thy goodness, therein to delight me, and although I gain much at Thy hands and Thou gettest nothing by me, yet know I that Thou art more willingly with me to do me good than I am with Thee to enjoy Thy goodness. Wherefore, O my Creator, do I lose so great a benefit as that which Thou givest unto the souls that come unto Thee by love and enjoy Thy celestial and divine consolations, seeing that this great good I may gain by breaking off with the world,

* Jer. i. 10.

which is vain, false, deceitful, and a tormentor of him that serveth it.

Open then, therefore, thine eyes, my soul, awake now, for it is high time to awake, understand and know the former years of thy life past, so evil spent, and behold what thou losest and wherefore thou losest it. It is time for thee now to fall into reckoning of these matters, and to see that thou losest the pleasure of the most sweet and delicate conversation of thy Spouse, Jesus Christ, for the stinking and abominable delight of the world. Hear the spouse who in the Canticles saith unto her Spouse, "My Beloved to me and I to Him."* My Beloved and I are so united that nobody can be besides where we two are, and seeing, therefore, there can be no other foreign and strange love stand with the love of Jesus Christ, whom is it meet that thou love, whether thy Lord and Creator of Whom thou hast received so many benefits, or the world that hath deceived, tormented, and destroyed thee? What is God Whom thou forsakest, but an infinite depth of goodness, a bottomless sea of sovereign sweetness, the sum of all goodness, and everlasting rest of holy souls? What is the world that thou lovest, but a prison of the living, a sepulchre of the dead, a shop of vices, a contempt of virtues, a tormentor of reason that carrieth us unto God, an enemy of those that are present, forgetful of those that are past, a corrupter and defacer of noble deeds? "Woe unto ye abused children," saith God by a Prophet, "who look for help and aid in the strength of Pharao, and put their hope in the shadow of Egypt."† Settest

* Cant. ii. 16. † Isaias xxx. 2.

thou thy love and care upon a thing of small substance, and so inconstant and vain as is a shadow? Forsake thou not, my soul, thy God for the world, which is nothing else but a dark shadow. So were the Hebrews deceived, who not giving credit unto Jeremias, but trusting in the forces of Pharao, went down into Egypt, where all of them died most miserably.* Set not thy thoughts upon these earthly vanities, for the food that God hath reserved for the just cannot be eaten with the world, because they are contrary, according to that saying of Isaias, "Unto whom will God teach His knowledge or make to understand that which he heareth?"† Unto those that are weaned and taken from the dug. Who shall be meet, O Lord, to taste of Thy holy love and to understand the sweetness thereof? Even he that forsaketh the milk and delights of the world. We must with all our hearts despise the pleasures, allurements, and delights of the world, if we will enjoy, O Lord, Thy sweet and delicate consolation; and therefore, that Thou mayest talk with our soul in the secret of our hearts, Thou sayest Thou wilt carry her to the wilderness,‡ for Thou wilt not have her, so long as she loveth the goods of the earth, to enjoy the sweetness of Thy holy love. Pharao would have had Israel to have sacrificed unto Thee in Egypt, which Moses would not yield unto,§ for it is in no wise tolerable, O Lord, to worship and adore Thee where the devil is served, and how then, O Lord, can I love Thee in the darkness of Egypt, having my heart enthralled in the love of this world? The Apostle

* Jer. ii. 18. † Isaias xxviii. 9. ‡ Osee ii. 14.
§ Exodus v. 2.

saith, "How can we drink the chalice of our Lord and the chalice of devils? You cannot be partakers of the table of our Lord and of the table of devils."*

Hereupon Thou commandest, O Lord, in the Old Law that the children of Israel should not eat leavened bread,† that they should not plough with an ass and an ox,‡ that they should not sow their land with meslin, nor wear any garments of linsey wolsey,§ for that Thou wouldst not have two contrary loves in one heart, nor that we should love the world and Thy Divine Majesty jointly together. The Israelites being afflicted and persecuted by the Philistines, and worshipping certain of the Gentiles called Baalim and Astaroth, the Prophet Samuel said unto all the people, "Turn unto our Lord with all your heart, and take from among you the strange gods Baalim and Astaroth, and prepare and make ready your heart unto our Lord, and serve Him only, and He will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines,"‖ and thus doing as the holy Prophet had commanded them, they obtained a great victory of their enemies. Thou wilt not have us love Thee, O God, so long as we worship idols of vices in our souls, and therefore it is meet that my heart love Thee alone, hating and detesting sin, according to the saying of the Prophet, "Ye that love our Lord abhor evil."¶

If I love Thee I ought to love all that Thou lovest and hate all that Thou hatest, and how, then, will I love two contraries? And how can I love Thee, my God, loving these worldly, vain, and corruptible things? I make small account to detest things that are so

* 1 Cor. x. 21. † Exodus xii. 19. ‡ Deut. xxii. 10.
§ Lev. xix. 19. ‖ 1 Kings vii. 3. ¶ Psalm xcvi. 10.

worthy of hatred, to gain thereby Thy holy love, seeing I despise but a dunghill and rotten muck for an excellent and most precious pearl. Thy Divine love is such a noble and excellent thing, that another world far better than this were to be despised for to enjoy such an inestimable gift as that is which Thou givest to Thy friends. Seeing, therefore, it is manifest contradiction to love Thee and the world together, I will love Thee only and alone, my God, abhorring the world so much as I desire to be enkindled and inflamed in that furnace of Thy holy and sovereign love.

SEVENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

OF THE DEGREES OF HEAVENLY LOVE.

WE have not, O Lord, this Thy divine love so much in our power that we can forthwith mount up unto it, but by little and little to obtain it. Although in very truth, if our nature had not been corrupted, our love should have begun at the top above, but being through sin hurt and sore maimed, it has lost the spiritual light, and took another beginning and way for to love. Even as a fountain floweth clearly and with mighty streams from the head where it springeth, but if it be stopped up with stones, wood, and clay, it seeketh some other issue, and whereas at first the water was clear, it now becometh muddy and filthy, having the first head and spring troubled; so is it in the fountain of love, which having the first

spring stopped, hath burst out another issue, troubled, stinking, corrupt and muddy, beginning with the love of ourselves, whereas we ought to begin with God, for this in very truth were more natural. But the nature of love being corrupted, love hath changed her beginning, insomuch that whereas we ought to love Thee, our Lord and God, first and chiefly for love of Thyself, and all other things for Thee and in Thee, we now begin with ourselves more than any other, and all that we love is for love of ourselves.

Hereupon it cometh that we begin to profit in Thy holy love, laying the foundation and beginning in ourselves, loving Thee not so much for Thyself as for our own cause, for knowing that without Thee we cannot be, the continual need that we see we have of Thy Divine Majesty enforceth and compelleth us to seek Thee to help us, and to call upon Thee to assist us, and to give us things necessary for this life. And hereupon also it cometh that because we cannot possess the things that we love without Thee, we therefore love Thee for our own cause, as upon necessity, and that we can neither will nor choose; and because continuing thus to love Thee, O Lord, for the need we have of Thee, we try and know Thy benignity towards us, Thy liberality, benevolence, sweetness and goodness, with many other divine perfections; hereupon it cometh that beginning to forget ourselves, we grow to have a liking of Thy goodness for Thy own sake, whereas at the first we sought it for our own profit and commodity. This is the third degree of love, for the first is that wherewith we love ourselves, the second that wherewith we love Thee

for ourselves, but the third degree of love is that wherewith we love Thee, and ourselves, and all things else besides, for Thee alone, and for love of Thee only.

When Jacob departed out of his father's house, and went into Mesopotamia, and slept upon a stone, he beheld in a vision a ladder, which had the one end upon the earth, and the other in Heaven,* and Thou, O Lord our God, wert leaning upon it. We are not birds, and cannot fly from earth into Heaven, and therefore must we ascend by little and little by a ladder, by the steps and degrees of love, which beginneth on the earth, and hath earthly foundation beginning of itself, and so ascending by steps and degrees unto Thy most holy love, which is heavenly, polished, perfect, and pure; and thus climbing up by these degrees of love, is daily polished and purified more and more, until it come to the height and top of true love, so that without any respect of ourselves we love Thee only for our own sake as most worthy to be beloved, for that Thou art the highest felicity and infinite goodness. And because our weak, imperfect, and corrupt nature hath need to be aided and assisted, Thou wert leaning, O Lord, upon that ladder, that by Thy heavenly assistance, and help of Thy holy hand, we might ascend to that Thy most excellent and sovereign love. "Every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, descending from the Father of lights."† And how much more, then, must love, which is of all gifts the most perfect? Love is a fire. And as the fire at the beginning when it impresseth its

* Gen. xxviii. 12. † St. James i. 17.

form in the matter of wood is dim and full of smoke, and after that it ascendeth unto its sphere becometh more pure, and waxeth bright and clear; so love, although at the beginning it be impure, imperfect, and earthly, ascending up towards its proper sphere, which is God, becometh better and better, and still more perfect, until it come to the point and top of perfection. A man hath then ascended to the place that he should ascend, and is as he should be, and where he should be, when altogether forgetting himself and all earthly things, he is transported and transformed into God, desiring nothing else in Heaven or in earth but the Creator and Lord of all things. He is a true lover that seeketh nothing for himself, nor pretendeth any particular good and profit to himself, either in Heaven or in earth, but in all that he thinketh, speaketh, or worketh, seeketh only the honour and glory of God, and to do His will in all things. Blessed is he that is come to so high a degree of love, that forgetteth himself wholly unto Thee, my God, and is transformed into Thee. Such felicity and bliss as this is cannot be obtained in this present, for it belongeth rather to the life to come than to this present, which is full of cares and divers wants that draw our heart, and bend and bow it to the love of this world, wherein the soul liveth captive in prison whether it will or no. If at any time we attain to this degree of excellent and pure love, we persevere continually in it.

But this corrupt body presseth down the soul, and maketh it stoop when it beginneth to fly on high, and the importunate flesh enforceth it many times to yield

unto things that it would not do,* disquieting and disturbing it with a thousand clamours and vanities, when it would willingly be at rest, and recreate itself with its Spouse, Jesus Christ. There never wants the busy flies of vain worldly thoughts and cares that disturbed the holy Patriarch Abraham when he offered sacrifice, and loved and prayed unto God as our Lord Himself had commanded him.† Unto this perfect degree of love was he come who said unto his Beloved,‡ "My heart is inflamed in Thy love, O Lord." And this mighty flame extinguisheth in me all wicked concupiscence, and forasmuch as this holy fire suffereth no fire to burn with it, hereupon it cometh that my reins have been altered from filthy concupiscence into clean and pure chastity, the fire of Heaven extinguishing and quenching in me all strange heat and hath wholly changed me, and the most mighty force of love hath dissolved and turned me to nothing. Thou hast fulfilled that in me, O Lord, which Thou spakest in times past for our salvation, with threatening words, "I will turn My hand unto thee, and will boil thy dross and melt thy tin."§ This I see verified in me, for all that was in me that was mine own is consumed and wasted, yea, all turned to nothing, for I live not now, I, but Christ liveth in me, and I know not of it. I know not, verily, the mystery of so great a change, that it is expedient for me to annihilate myself and become nothing, that I may thereby receive a true and perfect being and that I be wholly overcome in my God, as it is written, "My heart and my flesh

* Wisdom ix. 15. † Gen. xv. 11. ‡ Psalm lxxii. 21.
§ Isaias i. 25.

have fainted in the living God."* And again he saith, "My soul hath fainted in our Saviour."† Oh, what a good fainting is that when the soul fainteth in her God, and being come unto God is made one spirit with Him. This was agreeable enough to our nature, and our nature ready enough to yield unto it, that all things should be loved for His sake for Whom all things were made; and this love is to be thought both good and right which is so agreeable unto nature, and if our souls were not so light and of so small weight, this last degree of love should be first. So ought it to be, and so had it been had not sin stepped in between.

I may love Thee also, O Lord, after three manner of ways, that is, with other things, more than other things, and without anything else besides. He that loveth Thee with other things and loveth other things as much as Thee, divideth his heart and fulfilleth not the commandment of love. He that loveth Thee more than other things, although he do love other things lawfully with Thee, divideth not his heart, although in some sort he divert and turn it unto other things. This man fulfilleth the commandment of love, although he hath not attained to perfection. But he that loveth Thee only, O Lord, and nothing else besides, this man hath already attained to the top of perfection, and may say with the spouse, "My Beloved to me and I to Him Who is fed among the lilies." The first love buildeth for hell, the second buildeth upon the foundation of faith, stubble, wood, and straw, the third gold, silver and precious stones, as the Apostle saith.‡

* Psalm lxxxiii. 2. † Psalm cxviii. 81. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 12.

SEVENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

OF THE PROPERTIES OF THE LOVE OF GOD.

WHAT tongue, O Lord, is able to express the great power and virtue, the marvellous effects and most excellent properties of Thy holy love? St. Luke saith that Mary Magdalene had many sins forgiven her because she loved much.* That holy penitent shed many tears, carefully sought Thee at the house of the Pharisee, was diligent in purchasing the salvation of her soul, deferred not her conversion, nor put off her penance till another time; she was not idle in Thy presence who anointed Thy sacred Feet with precious ointment, washed them with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. And yet all these good works, no, nor greater than these, had not been able to have obtained remission of her sins without heavenly love. Although she did all these good works, yet, if she had not loved Thee, her sins had not been forgiven her. The love of God pardoneth sins, and that contrition which purchaseth remission of sins goeth accompanied with the love of God, in that it must be for the offence that the sinner hath made against God, Who ought to be beloved above all things, the which contrition obtaineth pardon of our sins, and of children of perdition maketh us the children of God and heirs of His glory; and all this by the power and virtue of holy love. All other good works, saving to love God above all things, may be done by a man remaining in deadly sin; but to love

* St. Luke vii. 47.

God and to lead a wicked life, is impossible. The love of God casteth out sin, expelleth wickedness, pardoneth offences, reconcileth our soul to God, maketh it His spouse and friend, openeth the gates of Heaven, enricheth it with inestimable treasures, and embraceth it with Jesus Christ, Who saith, "I love those that love Me."* He that loveth God is beloved of Him, and if he be beloved of God, how can he be but His friend? "To speak with tongues of men and Angels, to understand and know all sciences, to give all one's goods to the poor, to yield one's body to the fire, to wild beasts, to the sword, the knife, or any other cruel death; all this is nothing without the love of God."† It is not the pain of martyrdom that maketh a Martyr, but the cause for which he suffereth. It is love that maketh him a holy Martyr; it is that giveth him a crown, and rewardeth his labours; for look, where is not the love of God, there is neither merit nor grace nor glory, nor reward of eternal bliss. With love our soul liveth a life of grace. It is beloved of God, feared of the devils, reverenced of the Angels, made heir of Heaven and partaker of the bliss that all those enjoy that fear God, according to that saying in the Psalms, "I am made partaker, O Lord, with all them that fear Thee."‡ This is it which St. Peter saith covered the multitude of sins,§ and with it the soul is made rich and fair, strong, gracious, and full of all good, whereas without it she is dead, filthy, sorrowful, hateful to God, abominable to the world, a bond slave of the devil, and despised of all creatures.

* Prov. viii. 17. † 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3.
‡ Psalm cxviii. 63. § 1 St. Peter iv. 8.

With this holy love she is full of good, and without it full of all evil, and becometh most vile and miserable. Holy love maketh our good works fervent, for as heat raiseth up the substance and matter wherein it is, as we see by experience in the fire, which hoisteth up aloft the burning sparkles and raiseth the boiling water, so true and heavenly love causeth the desires of our soul to ascend up to celestial things, and to raise itself from these inferior earthly vanities. It is compared to the fire, which is more active and of greater power and virtue than the other elements, and therefore of greater perfection. So true love is of so great force that it doth not only make men Angels to ascend up unto God, far beyond their human and angelical natures, but also causeth God Himself to descend and debase Himself from His own nature, and to condescend unto creatures for the love that He beareth them. The nature of fire is to join things together that are of one and the same kind, and to dissever and separate those that are of divers kinds, as we see by experience in gold, which, when we would purify, we put into the fire, whereby it is purged clean from the dross, and all the gold runneth together. So love seeketh his like and separateth that which is not like, for never did any man love another but for some similitude and likeness of manners and conditions. And the same also doth heavenly love, which, when men have sinned, purgeth and taketh away that which is unlike to itself, which is the dross of wickedness, and turneth into smoke the quicksilver of sin, and then bringeth the soul again, made unto the image of God, to her first beauty, being, and likeness that she

had with God. Love is piercing as fire, for it will show itself wheresoever it is; and we never saw any man able to dissemble the fire that he beareth in his breast, for although he have so great patience that he were able to conceal it, yet will the smoke betray it. The like doth love where it is, which cannot be covered, how much soever the lover doth seek to dissemble it. By the chinks of the gates the light of the fire is betrayed that is within. It is the property of fire to return to its sphere, and to ascend upwards, and the like doth good and holy love, raising up our hearts, and lifting up our souls to the celestial sphere where they were created. It carrieth us unto God, and we come unto Him, not by going but by loving, Whom we shall always have so much the more present with us, the more firm that our love is wherewith we go towards Him. To love God is to draw nigh unto Him, and to enter and taste how our Lord is. True love admitteth no mean between it and God, and it passeth immediately towards the Beloved with great violence, and never resteth until it come unto Him. He that is wounded with the arrow of love thinketh that all men talk of his beloved, and that all men understand his language, and that they think and speak of that which he thinketh and speaketh.

When that glorious Mary Magdalene sought our Lord in the sepulchre, she said unto our Saviour, not knowing Who He was, "Tell me if thou hast taken Him away."* She saith not, nor telleth Him not Whom she sought, for he that loveth thinketh that all talk of that which he talketh, and seek the same that he

* St. John xx. 15.

seeketh; and this witnesseth also the spouse in the Canticles, where she saith, "I conjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, that you tell me where my Beloved is."* She nameth Him not, nor giveth any tokens of Him, for love will have all to guess and understand her cyphers. It seemed to her that all knew Whom she sought, and understood what she said, and that they spake of nothing, and therefore in this that the spouse saith we are not to have respect to the words, but to the effects, for that she loveth not with the tongue and the mouth, but in works and plain truth.

Love speaketh, and he must love that will understand her, for a cold heart cannot receive the burning words of a lover; as he that hath no knowledge in the Latin tongue cannot understand him that speaketh Latin, so the language of love seemeth barbarous to him that loveth not. Love hath its proper language and phrase of speech, and Demosthenes nor Tully were never so eloquent writers to speak of love as is a true lover. He uttereth his concepts with imperfect and short reasons; he would be understood with half a word; he will have all to be where he is, and to think as he thinketh, for he supposeth that every man knoweth his thought, and that they speak of nothing else but that which he speaketh. The Kings of the East† likewise give testimony hereof, who, loving God, and having this heavenly love burning in their breast, when they came to Jerusalem demanded where was He that was born King of the Jews; for it seemed unto them that in the same city there was talk of nothing else but of that which they spake of, and that

* Cant. v. 8. † St. Matt. ii. 2.

every man was able to answer their demand. It is the property of love also to be distrustful and very careful, and therefore holy Mary Magdalene and other devout women came that morning of the Resurrection of our Lord to anoint His holy Body.* Nicodemus had brought before about a hundred pound weight of myrrh and aloes,† and the Body of our Lord was very perfectly and fully anointed; and yet, for all that, came Mary Magdalene with more ointments, for a true lover trusteth nobody if his own hand be not to it. Too much contenteth him, and yet he thinketh it not enough. That woman, the Sunamitess, trusted none of her house, but came herself in person to Eliseus, to request him to raise her dead son to life again whom she dearly loved.‡ All the diligent speed that another could make seemed slothfulness unto her, because she loved earnestly. Love is very distrustful, and exceeding bold withal. Whereupon Mary Magdalene offered to carry the dead Body of our Lord, neither fearing the rage of the Pharisees, nor the danger wherein she put herself, nor respecting the heavy weight of the dead Body, nor her own feebleness, for love is not afraid, nor considereth anything nor thinketh anything impossible, but everything seemeth unto it light and easy. Whereupon the Apostle saith that "Charity suffereth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and beareth all things."§

* St. Mark xvi. 1, 2. † St. John xix. 39. ‡ 4 Kings iv. 27.
§ 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

SEVENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

HOW THE LOVE OF GOD TRANSFORMETH THE LOVER INTO THE BELOVED.

SO great and so strange is the force of love that it must be such as he is that I love, and like unto him to whom I am joined by love. There is neither paste nor glue that glueth so fast as love, which doth so unite and join us with the beloved that it transformeth the lover into him that he loveth. Love is nothing else but a mutual and uniting virtue. As iron, after it is much heated in the hearth, is made fire, so my heart, burning, O my God, in Thy divine and holy love, is wholly transformed into Thee by love, and deified. The hard, cold, black, and duskish iron is made soft, warm, bright, and clear, and hath all the operations of fire, and worketh all the effects that fire worketh, for it burneth, lighteneth, and inflameth. The Scripture, O God and our Lord, calleth Thee fire,* and we are made the like by coming unto Thee by love, for of sinners that we were before, hard as iron, obstinate, cold, black, deformed, and filthy, approaching unto Thee by love, and love putting us into this hearth of burning flames as Moses saw Thee in the bush,† so are we converted into Thee and made fire, and work heavenly works, and become spiritual men of carnal and earthly that we were before.

The Apostle St. Paul was so converted and transformed into Thee that he saith unto the Galatians, "I live, not now I, but Christ liveth in me."‡ This

* Deut. iv. 24. † Exodus iii. 3. ‡ Gal. ii. 20.

holy Apostle lived in such sort in Thee, and was so transformed into Thee, that his life was not now his own, and he was not in himself, but in his Beloved. Oh, I would it pleased Thee, my God and my Lord, that my soul were so swallowed up in this sea of infinite love and goodness that I were not now myself, but that, by divine participation, I were transformed and changed into Thy sovereign goodness and clemency. Oh, that any man were able to give me this gift, that my thoughts might be upon Thee only, and that the force of them might be employed in burning before Thy divine presence, in such sort that I might say with the Prophet, "The thought of my heart is always in Thy presence."* Oh, I would to God that there were but one lamp burning in the altar of my soul, lighted with the fire of true love, and continually fed and maintained with all that I understand and hear of Thy wonderful perfections, that this might be that same most pure oil which in old time Thou commandedst to be burned in the sanctuary.†

Oh, that it will please Thee, our Lord, to use that gentle and loving chastisement upon my soul that Thou threatenedst it withal by the Prophet Osee, saying, "I will compass about thy way with thorns and with walls that thou art not able to break."‡ I will make all things hard and difficult unto thee, because if thou wouldst seek any other strange loves thou shouldst not find them, but return unto Me again. O happy necessity, which bindeth to seek none but Him Who only deserveth to be beloved.

* Psalm xviii. 15. † Exodus xxxv. 8.
‡ Osee ii. 6.

Let us now therefore make an end, O my soul, of these vain vagaries, and recollecting thy thoughts, set thy whole care alone upon thy Spouse, Jesus Christ only. If thou didst love thy God truly, thou wouldst forget all things else in the world. The Apostle esteemed all things as dung for the love of Jesus Christ. So, when our first father Adam was in the state of innocency, and God commanded him to eat of the fruit of the trees in Paradise,* it was needful for God to put him in remembrance to eat of them, for that otherwise, by reason of the great love that he bore unto God, he might haply have forgotten to take his necessary food for conservation of life. If thou love thy God and Lord with true and perfect love, thou wouldst not be so careful of these external things, which do so much distract thee and draw thee away. The nearer that our will approacheth unto God the further off it departeth from ourselves, and we ought to have it so joined and settled in God that we should forget all that is here on earth, and be transformed, converted, and lifted up unto God.

If I loved Thee truly, O Lord, the force of love would make me like unto that which I love, for by transforming myself into Thee I should become like unto that which I love, and if likeness be a cause of love, this love would so ascend and augment that it would raise up withal my nature and all that is in me, and cause nothing to remain without Thy holy love. Behold then, my soul, thine own beauty, and thou shalt understand what beauty thou oughtest to love. Thou hast a Husband and knowest Him not,

* Gen. ii. 16.

because thou never sawest His face. If thou hadst ever seen Him thou wouldst not doubt of His beauty, neither could any man be able to withhold thee from loving Him. So great is the force of love, that there thou dwellest where by contemplation thou lovest. This is the Kingdom of God that is within thee, which thou destroyest when thou lovest outward things. Loving this Kingdom of Heaven thou art queen in it, and having it within thee thou enjoyest infinite riches that the love of God carrieth with it. If thou love Heaven thou art celestial, and if thou settest thy love upon earthly things thou art earthly. Seeing, therefore, that love maketh such marvellous effects in my soul, that, being transformed by love, I am made the thing that I love, my heart shall love Thee, O Lord, to the utmost of its power, force, and strength, and as much as possibly it is able, for by these means I am carried up to so high and noble estate, and exalted to such excellent and supreme honour, that all things created are less when I love Thee not than my heart alone when it burneth in Thy heavenly love. And this transformation of the lover into the thing beloved is not violent, nor forcible, nor painful, nor laboursome, but voluntary, sweet, pleasant, and delectable. And hereupon it cometh that the will that is thus joined by love unto the thing beloved cannot by any violent force be separated from it, but only by its own free will, and I would it pleased Thee, my God, that my will were deprived of such liberty and freedom, that, after it once loved Thee, it might never turn back nor change the love and liking, but love for evermore that supreme goodness and infinite

bliss, where my heart may burn perpetually in lively flames of heavenly love. But this love remaineth free and at liberty, although the thing be transformed into the thing beloved, and so the will continueth always a will, and in free power and liberty, although by love it be transformed into him that it loveth.

It is a marvellous thing that, in this transformation that love causeth of the lover into the beloved, such as the thing beloved is, the like is the lover, and look what the love is, such is the will from whence it proceedeth. Hereupon it followeth that the thing which is principally and chiefly loved gives name, nature, and force to the will it loveth, and hereupon I conclude that, forasmuch as it is the property of love to change, convert, and transform the lover into the person or thing beloved, that if the will do principally love earth it is made earth and earthly, and their love is called earthly; and if it love mortal things it is called a mortal and human will; and if it love Angels it is angelical; but if it love Thee, our God and Lord, it is then called divine and heavenly. And herein is showed the great dignity of man, which is that by love he is able to transform and change himself into anything that he listeth, either higher or lower than himself is.

Nabuchodonosor, who followed as a beast his own beastly appetites, governing himself by his outward senses, by which only unreasonable beasts do work and are directed, the Scripture saith that he went as a beast, feeding upon the grass of the field.* And of spiritual men that love God, David speaketh in the Psalm, saying, "I have said ye are gods, and the

* Dan. iv. 30.

children of the Most High."* Seeing, therefore, I may obtain so high dignity by loving, it is meet, my God and my Lord, that my heart love Thee night and day all the days of my life. And if thou wilt say, my soul, that amidst all the griefs and sorrows of this miserable life thou canst not for pensiveness lift up thyself to the love of God; as Aaron said, that with a heavy and sorrowful mind he was not able to make a feast unto God; behold that these travails are strokes upon the tender steel, which God giveth thee to drive out of the hard flint of thy heart sparkles of fire of love, and that He afflicteth thee to the end thou mayest love Him. For our most merciful Lord, seeing that thy heart is not mollified with benefits, wearieth thee with travails, that by this means thou mayest go unto Him by love, and by loving Him mayest recover a new being and honour transformed by love into God.

* Psalm lxxxi. 6.

SEVENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

HOW THE LOVE OF GOD INFLAMETH OUR SOULS IN THE DESIRE OF HEAVENLY THINGS.

GIVE me leave, O Lord, to declare unto Thee the desire that Thy divine love enkindleth in my soul by Thy heavenly light and presence, not as though Thou shouldst thereby understand anything that Thou knowest not already, for Thou seest plainly the secret of every heart, but because I find none, neither in Heaven nor in earth, unto whom to make my complaints but unto Thee, Who as God seest all things, takest pity as a father, and, as almighty, art able to help and succour me; as also the pains that grow of Thy holy and chaste love, bring comfort and consolation with them when they be reserved unto Thee, and when he that suffereth them doth well weigh and consider what a happy end is wont to be obtained at Thy hands.

But what shall I do, O Lord, to express all that I conceive of Thee, whereas my understanding, guided (I know not how) by Thy heavenly light, directeth me unto Thee, and leaveth my will so enthralled that, when I would declare that which I find in Thee, or rather that which I hope to find in Thee, my understanding faileth me, and how much more my tongue and my hand? He loveth and desireth Thee very little that is able to utter all that he conceiveth of Thee, for as the measure of Thy love must be without measure, so the desire of Thy heavenly presence must

be showed with tears, and not with words; and therefore, if I would by some similitude declare it, I find all things so different from that which is requisite to the measure thereof, that I may better say it is not my desire at all than lively express it as it is. I do not only desire; the spouse longeth for the sight of her Husband, reckon she the days and hours never so much, for the love of corporal beauty or delights can never come near that love which the beauty of Him requireth Who hath painted the stars, and in comparison of Whom, as Job saith, "the heavens are not clear, and the Angels in His presence have no show."*

My desire is not like to that of the faithful and obedient child, which cannot abide the absence of his loving father, by whose coming he hopeth for much increase of honour and dignity, for Thou art more than a father, and with Thee are all goods and riches, according to that which Thou saidst to Thy servant Moses, "I will show thee all good;"† and to declare every one of them in particular were more hard and difficult than to tell the drops of rain. It is but a small desire in respect of this that a poor imprisoned captive hath, who liveth in continual danger of his life, to get some faithful friend to mind, by whose diligent suit he may obtain his liberty and return to his native country; for he that loveth Thee and cometh unto Thee shall have certain redemption of body, and shall be sure from the tyranny of this world, and his soul shall forthwith obtain liberty to submit herself wholly unto Thee, and that free servitude and liberty shall utterly cease for to be able to

* Job xv. 15. † Exodus xxxiii. 19.

lose Thee, for she shall now be no more in her own power but in Thine, and Thou shalt give her free liberty to enjoy Thee for evermore, but not to depart from Thee at any time, for Thy divine love, O Lord, putteth so great a desire within me that my soul desireth Thee, not as a thing that we love here on earth, but as one that desireth God, for such a desire only may be compared unto Thee.

And if I use any similitude of anything, I mean that it resembleth Thee in some point, and not that the one is a portrait of the other, for so should I injure Thee by comparing and measuring Thee with base and earthly things here below; and with that proviso I will be bold to say with the Psalmist, "As the hart desireth the fountains of waters, so my soul desireth Thee, my God."* As the seely beast, chafed with inward thirst, and pursued with hunters and hounds, maketh haste to get to soil where he thinketh to rest himself, to heal his wounds, and to escape danger, or to refresh himself of the inward excessive heat that tormenteth him, so my soul, inwardly inflamed with the fire of Thy holy love, and outwardly assailed with many enemies, seeing herself wounded and bleeding in some parts, desireth and seeketh unto Thee, that Thy merciful hand may heal her, and Thy strong arm defend her, and that Thou mayest guide her to the flowing fountain of waters of life. He shall need to desire nothing else that is once in Thy heavenly presence, according to that saying of Isaias, "They shall neither have hunger nor thirst, they shall not be parched with the heat of

* Psalm xli. 2.

summer sun; for our most merciful Lord shall direct and govern them, and carry them to the fountains of waters."*

There shall then remain nothing for my soul to desire nor for my will to wish and covet, for I shall be filled and satisfied when I see and behold Thy glory,† but being severed from Thee, the water of Thy divine consolation faileth, as it failed unto Agar in the desert, out of the house of Abraham. It is meet and convenient, therefore, that my soul return unto Thee, my God, burning in flames of fire of love, that through these her desires enkindled in love, she may carefully seek Thee and diligently come unto Thee, O Lord, where she may live and rest. He that loveth and desireth Thee earnestly abhorreth all that is here present; and all that ever the world can yield me is but vexation, that troubleth and grieveth my heart, when I remember the celestial palace and heavenly habitation, and the inestimable riches of Thy glory, O Lord. Whoso, by the help of Thy grace and holy Spirit, hath been elevated and lifted up to behold Thee, the great breadth and wideness of Thy omnipotency, and those large habitations of Thy holy city, how narrow and strait a thing will all the world and all things created seem unto him, or how can the eye once look aside to behold anything else besides Thee?

I marvel not at that which the Prophet Isaias saith, when, after he had contemplated Thy wonderful greatness, he came to view and consider these things here on earth. "Behold," said he, "that all nations are as

* Isaias xlix. 10. † Psalm xvi. 15.

a little drop of water that droppeth from a still, and as a grain of lightest weight that may be, and all the islands as a little dust;"* and yet, having compared them unto something, he thought he had said little, and therefore he giveth another sentence more properly expressing the matter, saying that all is nothing but as an empty vessel; and so it ought to be esteemed. Which opinion is more worth than the judgment of the vain children of this world and inhabitants of the earth, who utterly undo themselves for to extend their bounds, as though, by having a little wider prison, the liberty of spirit were any whit enlarged for which all the world is so little.

My soul, therefore, seeing and having known by experience that all things here on earth cannot suffice her desire, pricked forward with the spur of Thy holy love, desireth Thee, O Lord, and burneth in heavenly desires, and, tormented with delay, suffereth patiently, and is comforted in this life with hope, firmly trusting upon that which is written, "Thou hast heard, O Lord, the desire of the poor, and Thine ear hath harkened to the preparation of their heart."† "All my whole desire is in Thy sight,"‡ which is nothing else but to love and see Thee, in Whom only is the accomplishing of all desires, and in Whom there wanteth nothing that one can wish or desire; and the heart being full of Thy holy love, may be secure and certain that it should never cease loving Thee, being once confirmed in Thy grace and love. Prolong not, O my most merciful Lord and only bliss, the accomplishing

* Isaias. xl. 15. † Psalm ix. 19.
‡ Psalm xxxvii. 10.

of my desires, for love provoketh and pricketh me forward to go and get me unto Thee, and to love Thee for evermore.

SEVENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

HOW THIS LIFE IS PAINFUL TO ONE THAT LOVETH GOD.

UNDERSTANDING and knowing by faith that the divine presence of Thee, my God and my Lord, is the end of all my desires, and that this so high a good cannot be obtained in this life, according to that which Thou saidst unto Moses, "No man can see Me whilst he liveth,"* the delay and prolongation hereof must needs be grievous to any man that understandeth the difference betwixt that which here he possesseth and that which he hopeth for; and although the desire of natural life be so great that it maketh a man cheerfully endure great and many pains to preserve it, yet doth the desire that through Thy grace I have to see Thee so far exceed it, that were it not for fear by cutting off the course of my life altogether to lose it, I would take away this stop and hindrance with mine own hands; but seeing that Thy heavenly law permitteth not this, yet hath my heart attained to that estate wherein, with the Apostle, it may say, being bold therefore always, and knowing that while we are in the body we are pilgrims from God, for we walk by faith, and not by sight;† but we are bound and have a good will to be

* Exodus xxxiii. 20. † 2 Cor. v. 6.

pilgrims rather from the body, and to be present with our Lord; and therefore my soul, full of faith through the hope that it conceiveth, can never have her eyes off from Heaven, where she hath her seat prepared, but passeth through all, and stayeth at nothing that she findeth in her way, saying with the Prophet, "What is there in Heaven that sufficeth me, and what would I have on earth?"* Although it be given, O Lord, with Thy own hands, yet is it so little, that my soul fainteth for hunger, for that none of all this is comparable to that glory, which is, as it were, a looking-glass both of the one and the other. And no marvel, for nature even, in all things without knowledge, inclineth them in such sort that it suffereth them not to rest out of the place whereto their natural instinct and inclination directeth them. There is no limbeck of gold, how rich and of great value so ever it be, wherein water will stay, but finding an issue, getteth forth to its natural place. And what must that soul needs feel which understandeth by faith what is prepared for her, and to which Thou, O Lord, in secret language, sayest that which Thou spakest in plain words to the Patriarch Abraham, "I am thy reward, wonderful great."† How desirous must she needs be to be with Thee, whom hope and violent inclination carrieth after these sweet savours of that infinite good, in Whose sight and presence all vanisheth to nothing that here seemeth and is esteemed good.

This consolation felt that just old Simeon, and knowing Thee by faith, and seeing Thee through the

* Psalm lxxii. 25. † Gen. xv. 1.

wall of this mortal body, the desire that he had to be loosed and set free from the bands of flesh wherein he was imprisoned, began presently to mount up and take a wing, and, rejoicing in spirit, began to sing Thy praises; for although he knew that till after Thy death he could not have the fruition of Thee in Heaven, yet rejoiced he in that his soul, being separated from the lumpishness of his body, he might the better contemplate Thy Divine Majesty. The heart of this holy man burned in love, and he desired to be with his Beloved, for it is natural in our soul to go towards her felicity, whereof, when she once beginneth here on earth to taste, this present life becometh painful to the soul which feeleth the pleasant smell of Thy sweet odours. A bird that is kept in a cage, although it be of gold or silver, is not quiet nor content, but doth naturally desire her liberty, and to fly in the air, whereunto she was created, and she thrusteth out her head, and seeketh a place to get out.

O infinite goodness of my God! and what a painful prison, and grievous stop and hindrance must the body needs be, how beautiful soever though it be clothed with satins and decked with rich jewels and other pleasures of life, unto the soul which was created to see, and behold, and to enjoy Thy divine essence in Heaven! Oh, what a painful stay and long delay is that of this life, short unto them that love it, but very long unto those that love Thee: to worldlings short and pleasant, but to such as desire to be with Thee, a very bitter and irksome life. All things tend unto Thee, and with violent speed do run

to their end; and if to maintain so gross an essence, all things, O Lord, that hath no knowledge of Thee make such haste to their end, what shall my soul feel, which being come unto Thee, shall have her spiritual essence changed into divine, and be transformed into Thy brightness. I marvel not that the Saints so much bewailed so great solitariness, but I am astonished how my soul can be content and quiet without such company. It is no marvel that the just man desireth to be out of this life, for that his "life is Christ, and to die is gain."* But it is much to be marvelled at that we are so affected to our own good, that we use most and greatest diligence in providing for the present, and never remember time to come. Charity, being not so desirous to find her own private profit as to enjoy the heavenly felicity, impatient of the want and absence thereof, enkindleth with continual sighs and tears the fire, that it may always burn, and in everything that it seeth seeketh the face and presence of that which it loveth. It inquireth of all men, with the Spouse, if they saw her Beloved.† Yea, and is so bold as to request them that live and converse with Him to send her some flowers and fruits from thence, wherewith to maintain her life and comfort her. The grief of this wound maketh him impatient that feeleth it; for by curing it increaseth, and the more medicine there is laid unto it, the wider and deeper it waxeth. There is made a wonderful strange circle, much like the motion of the heavens, for the soul can do nothing else but meditate upon the good that it loveth, and any other thoughts she holdeth

* Phil. i. 21. † Cant. iii. 3.

strange and bastardly, as men say the eagle doth of her young ones if they do not look against the light of the sun.

Of this consideration groweth always a desire, and thereof love, for that she continually seeth reasons more and more to love, and so cometh the soul to burn in her own flames, whereupon ensueth that hunger which cannot be satisfied, but only with Thee, the Bread of Life, Who camest down from Heaven. And this alone is sufficient to make one loathe and detest this present life, who knoweth any more than what he feeleth and seeth with his external senses. O Heavenly Beauty, when wilt Thou take this veil from mine eyes, and show me Thy divine face, that I may behold that inaccessible light, and never be separated from Thy presence? The first thing that I shall gain by Thy presence is that I shall find myself, for now, in very truth, I am lost, and go astray, not only when I offend Thee, but also when I desire to seek Thee in the secret of my heart, and suddenly, like water, am shed and spilled before Thee. I come before Thy presence, and vanish, I wot not how, and I find not myself when I would seek Thee, but am lost in vain fancies, which carry me after them against my will. But when I shall come unto Thy presence, the light of Thy glory shall continually show itself, so that Thou mayest be seen. Then shall my will be fulfilled, and my desires be accomplished, and then will I sing a hymn unto our Lord God of the fountains of Israel, when attaining to Thy sight, my God, I shall drink of the waters of Thy glory and everlasting bliss at the very springhead and fountain.

But now in this exile and banishment, besieged in Bethulia with the host of the Assyrians,* which assault my soul and my body with temptations and adversities, I shall content myself with a little water, comforting myself with these Thy limited consolations until that the time come that I may drink of that most plentiful abundance of waters in those four principal rivers that run in this paradise of delights. And in the meantime, till that most happy day fall out, so much desired of my soul, extend, O Lord, Thy mercy, and impart unto me some portion of Thy infinite treasure, and respect not so much my evil and nakedness as thereby to forget Thy goodness; and though I have deserved wherefore Thou mayest justly condemn me, yet hast Thou not lost, O Lord, the means whereby to save me. Make me, O Lord, to taste with affection that whereunto I attain by knowledge. Heavy is the burden, and sharp the yoke of my painful life, and therefore it is needful that Thou, O most merciful Lord, gathering in Thy justice to Thyself, and extending Thy infinite mercy upon me, do ease and lighten my burthen, strengthen my desire, and visit my soul with Thy grace, that I may be able to endure this painful life whilst I continue in it, till such time as I may come to enjoy Thee in Heaven for ever.

* Judith vii. 7.

SEVENTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

HOW LOVE IS SHOWED BY WORKS.

BY great good reason is love compared to the fire which is never idle, but always worketh upon fit and convenient matter. O fire of holy love, which workest continually wheresoever Thou comest, and givest always where need requireth, as it is not possible to keep fire in one's bosom and not to burn his garments, so is it against all reason, and impossible, to have love and be cold in works. Wherefore in the Proverbs it is written, "Can haply a man hide fire in his bosom, and not burn his garments? and walk upon live glowing coals, and not scorch the soles of his feet?"* The Prophet Ezechiel sayeth of those four beasts, that they were as fire, and their looks like burning flames,† for they burned in heavenly love. But they stood not still, but went on right forward. In like manner, O Lord, they that burn in the spirit of Thy holy love, live not idly, nor stand still, but walk the way of Thy holy commandments, working good works, and exercising themselves in holy exercises.

Thou commandest, O Lord, in Leviticus, that there should be fire continually burning on the altar, which the Priest should maintain and feed with wood, and that the sacrifice of peace being laid thereon, the fat and entrails of the beast should be burned. This is that continual fire which should never go out in the

* Prov. vi. 27, 28. † Ezech. i. 14.

altar of my heart, and I ought to maintain it night and day, and at all times, with holy works, with good thoughts, with reading and prayer, and with other commendable exercises, lest haply the Bridegroom should come at an hour that we think not of Him, and for want of oil, our lamps being gone out, we should be cast off from His company for ever, and so come to hear that dreadful voice that shall say, "I know you not."

As this fire is maintained with oil, so is the love of God with good works, and therefore the Prophet Zachary, in that marvellous vision that he saw, with the seven lamps saw also seven cruets of oil, with which the fire of the lamps was maintained, that it might not go out. And hereupon doth Solomon give that wholesome and profitable counsel to every one of us, saying, "Let thy garments be white at all times, and let there never want oil upon thy head." That is, let there never want in thee love and exercise of good works, for with this oil, as with food, is enkindled and increased the flame of Thy divine love.

Haply hast Thou, O Lord and my God, being so great a Lord as Thou art, been cold in Thy works! Oh, with what zeal hast Thou served us! with what fervour hast Thou wrought our salvation! and with what care and diligence hast Thou gone about our redemption. Thou never stayedst nor restedst, walking from one coast to another, going round about cities, towns, and streets, preaching and teaching, and confirming Thy doctrine with great and manifest miracles. Thou spentest Thy time in preaching, in healing those

that were sick, restoring to health those that were troubled with fevers, giving sight to the blind, making the lame to walk, cleansing of lepers, and curing all kind of maladies of all diseased persons which there resorted unto Thee out of all countries. And after Thou hadst been importunately sought unto and troubled with these people even until sunsetting,* weary and stark tired as Thou wert, Thou wentest up to the mountain, and there continuedst all the night long in watching and prayer; and the day began again no sooner to peep, but that Thou wentest to the Temple to preach, to convert sinners, and to receive them to penance.† Thus wert Thou up early in the morning to use Thy accustomed mercy unto the woman taken in adultery, and she beheld Thee, O Lord, sitting in the midst of publicans and sinners, with a kind of mildness and benignity more divine than human, and how Thou preachedst unto them sweetly of the Kingdom of God, and forgavest them their sins.

O Preacher never weary of teaching, O most painful toiler and my careful Redeemer, what shoulders of any giant had been able to bear and carry the burthen of labours and sweating pains that Thou hast sustained for us? What man, although he were not of flesh and blood, but of steel, or some harder or stronger metal, would not have shrunk and yielded with so great a weight? I speak not now of Thy most bitter death and dolorous Passion, but of Thy painful life, of Thy labours in preaching and making long sermons, of that wonderful great

* St. Luke iv. 40. † St. John viii. 2.

diligence that Thou usedst to seek the salvation of our souls, and of the intollerable toils that Thou enduredst for us. If works, therefore, show one's love, let the possessed of devils whom Thou curedst, the lame that Thou healedst, the sick that Thou restoredst to health, and the dead that Thou raisedst to life, tell me the love that Thou hast borne us. What greater testimonies wouldst Thou have, my soul, of the unspeakable love that Thy Spouse, Jesus Christ, beareth to Thee? What more plain and evident token of the strange and wonderful love wherewith thy good Lord and Redeemer loveth Thee? The works are so great, laboursome, and painful, that were it not for the immeasurable love of Him that wrought them, He could never endure them. And as all the whole space of Thy life Thou lovedst, O most merciful Lord, those who were Thine in the world, and, with such notable manifest works didst show the love that Thou borest them, so, in the end, when Thou wert to depart from them, Thou didst most plainly, with apparent and evident works, declare how earnestly Thou lovedst them, giving them Thine own body for meat, and making Thyself, as a a great and loving shepherd, food for Thy sheep.

And sleepest Thou, O my soul, for all these things? What sayest thou to this? Thinkest thou that it is meet for thee to be idle and sluggish, seeing thy Spouse, Jesus Christ, sweating, weary, and tired, and turmoiled for Thy service? O true lover of our souls, my Redeemer and sweetness of my life, why do I not love Thee, my God, infinite Goodness, and my whole weal? Why labour I not and sweat, without being

idle any minute of an hour? And why busy I not myself in good works, yea, even to spend my life in Thy service, and to lose it, if need were, for Him Who lost His own to give it me, and to labour even to death for Him Who suffered death Himself to give me rest? It is not meet that we love Him with an idle life, Who with so great pain and travail loveth us, that a Prophet saith of Him, He hath laboured, suffering much, but that our works give testimony of the love that we bear Him. Wherefore, O my bliss and my Saviour, evermore when Thou commendest Thy love unto us, Thou speakest immediately of works. Speaking of this Thy holy love, Thou sayest in the Gospel, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments;"* and in another place Thou sayest, "If any man love Me he will keep My commandments;" and of the love of our neighbour Thou sayest, "This I command you, that you love one another."† And Thou addest forthwith, treating of works, "No man hath greater charity than this, that a man yield his life for his friends." Also, when Thou taughtest the love that we ought to bear to our enemies, commanding us to love them, Thou saidst, "Do good to those who hate you."‡ Thou broughtest down the fire of love from Heaven to earth, and because Thou wouldst not have it be idle, but to work, burn, and flame, Thou saidst these very words, "I came to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled."§ Thou wilt not, O Lord, that a true lover suffer the fire of Thy heavenly love to go out in his breast, but that it burn,

* St. John xiv. 15. † St. John xv. 12. ‡ St. Matt. v. 44.
§ St. Luke xii. 49.

and show itself by working, and give testimony by holy exercises, of the love that it beareth Thee. Wherefore, O Lord, didst Thou destroy the fig-tree that was planted in the vineyard,* but because it bore no fruit, and, therefore, Thy holy Apostle St. John counselleth us, saying, "My children, let us not love in word, nor in thought, but in deed and truth."† And the like saidst Thou Thyself to a holy soul in the Canticles, instructing it how and in what sort Thou wilt be loved. "Place Me for a sign in thy heart, and for a mark upon thine arm, for love is strong as death." Speaking, O Lord, of love and of the force thereof, Thou wilt have us near Thee in our heart and in our arm, for love ought not only to rest in the heart, but to be showed also in the arm by works.

Thou wouldst, O Lord and our God, that Thy holy love should shine in us both within and without, in loving Thee inwardly, and by showing it with external works; and, therefore, Thou saidst unto Thy Apostles, "In this all men shall know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."‡ The outward works give testimony of the inward love, and with this testimony and mark of love Thou wouldst have, O Lord, Thy sheep red ochred. If a man be in a swoon, some think he is dead, but the physician, finding his pulse beat, saith that he is alive, but if it beat not, he holdeth him for dead. The pulse is not life, but a token of life, which consisteth of having within the body a soul. The light of the soul is the love of God, and he who hath this liveth; but good works, as the pulse does, show that there is the life of

* St. Luke xiii. 7. † 1 St. John iii. 18. ‡ St. John xiii. 35.

love in the soul. It is meet, therefore, O my soul, that I love Thee, and that I declare and show the love that I bear Thee with works, seeing that Thine have been so plain a testimony of the infinite love wherewith Thou hast loved us.

EIGHTIETH MEDITATION.

HOW THE LOVE OF GOD GIVETH THE MERIT TO OUR WORKS.

THIS Thy holy and divine love, O Lord, is so noble a thing that, although Thou commandest us to do good works, yet, acceptest Thou none of them, nor all of them together, thereby to give us grace and glory, if they be not accompanied with Thy holy love. Thy holy love is the furnace wherein all our virtuous works are purified and made clean, which contain as much merit as there is love in them. This is that sicle of weight of the sanctuary, wherewith all things are weighed, as it is written in Leviticus, "that everything of account and value shall be weighed with the sicle of the sanctuary."* And as they used to do then, in that figurative sanctuary, the like is now done in the true sanctuary of Heaven, where all gifts are weighed with the sicle of love.

If I offer unto Thy Divine Majesty, O Lord, tears, prayers, fastings, alms, or any other good work, they must be weighed in the weights of love, for, according

* Exodus xxxviii. 24; Lev. xxvii. 3.

to the grains of love that every one of these coins shall have in it, it shall hold weight and receive merit before Thy Divine Presence. The works that we do here shall receive so much honour and glory in Heaven as they have in them of love and grace. A full, good, and abundant measure, shall be given me in my bosom,* but it must be weighed with this sicle and weight of the sanctuary, wherewith everything is weighed that is offered. I will look that, "being put in the balance I be not found too light,"† and wanting weight that I perish; and, therefore, it is good in this mortal life to labour and endeavour all, that I may not want this treasure and weight of love. Look unto it, therefore, my soul, that thou want not this precious pearl and most excellent margarite, but "go and sell all that thou hast for to buy it,"‡ and love every day more and more, and settle and strengthen thyself in it for evermore, for vain and idle is the time passed that is not spent in this, and vain and fruitless is every work that is not directed thereunto. Thou art, O Lord, so good and bountiful, that Thou receivest nothing at our hands unless we first offer unto Thee our love and our will. Those two hundred and fifty men did a good work that offered incense in the Tabernacle, yet did fire come forth and burn them all up, because they had not in them Thy holy love, without which Thou acceptest not our works. All the virtuous actions and good deeds that ever we can do, are of small merit without charity and Thy holy love. The purple taketh no perfect colour unless it be engrained, and so virtues

* St. Luke vi. 38. † Dan. v. 27. ‡ St. Matt. xiii. 46.

receive not any colour of eternal merit, unless it be engrained with charity, and, for this cause, Thou commandedst that all sacrifices which were to be offered should pass through fire.* What else requirest Thou in all my petty services, but that all the works that ever I do shall be accompanied with Thy holy love? What hast Thou ever done for me, that hast not sparkled out fire, and cast forth burning flames of love? And so requirest Thou that every sacrifice that I offer unto Thee, and all the good works that I do, be full of Thy holy love, to the end they may be acceptable unto Thy Divine Majesty. Hereupon, Thou acceptedst the sacrifice of Abel, and not of Cain, because the one was offered with love and the other not. Esau wept as well as Magdalene, and yet were the tears of Magdalene accepted and those of Esau rejected, because the true penitent did love, and the tears and repentance of Esau wanted Thy holy love. What avail whole seas of tears, fervent desires, deep scalding sighs, extreme grief, and sorrow, and earnest repentance, if all be without Thy holy love? The life of man is labour and toil, it is beset round with sorrow, compassed about with diseases, and with many things that cause grief and discontent. "Man, that is born of a woman, is full of many miseries."

Seeing, therefore, that we cannot be excused from labour, and that no man can avoid pain, in how prosperous a state soever he live, wherefore, O my God, shall I be so unwise and evil advised as not to make my profit and commodity of these evils, which I must pass over of necessity, by loving Thee, seeing

* Lev. vi. 23.

that by mingling them with Thy holy love, I may merit Heaven by them, and attain to bliss eternal. Oh, how foolish are they, O Lord, who love Thee not, and how mad and senseless are they, who, forsaking Thy holy love, put their salvation in jeopardy, and lead their life in continual pain and torment. It were mere madness not to take our benefit of time, and not to give life to the travails of this life, which is pleasantly passed over, and the labours thereof besides meritorious of life everlasting when, living in charity, we sustain them cheerfully for the love of Thee. I yield Thee infinite thanks, O Lord, seeing that, for such short labours and small works of ours, Thou vouchsafest to bestow Thy glory upon us, and, to the end that we may buy it the more cheap and live the more pleasantly, Thou wouldst have us to love Thee. Thou desirest, O Lord, all good unto us, and Thou rewardest not with eternal bliss, but only those works that are done in love and charity, by this means to draw us to Thy holy love, and that so we might lead here a pleasant life, and after, enter into the life of glory. As the earth of itself is barren, and yieldeth not forth fruit but by the help of the influences from heaven, so is the barrenness of our souls the cause that no work of its own, how good soever it may be, can yield any fruit, unless it be wrought in grace and in Thy holy love. There is a kind of winter pears that cannot be eaten, unless they be roasted in the fire. Thou digestest not our works, O Lord, nor acceptest them, how good soever they be as for doing them, to reward them with eternal glory, unless they be roasted in the fire of Thy holy love.

It is love that giveth a taste to all that ever we do; and it is love that maketh all our good works of value and account, for this Thy holy love, O Lord, is not only precious of itself, but maketh all other things also precious. What is knowledge, what is eloquence, what is prayer, fasting, or almsdeeds, or any other good work, how great soever it be, without love? The Apostle maketh no account of faith, although it were such as were able to remove mountains, nor of the tongues of Angels and men, nor of martyrdom, nor of giving all our goods to the poor, without charity. The poor offering of the widow was more acceptable and gracious in Thy sight than the rich presents that the mighty offered in the Temple, for that Thou, O Lord, regardest not how much, but with how much; Thou lookest not to riches of the present, but to the will of the lover; and Thou respectest not how much we give, but with how much love we give it. Whereupon the holy Apostle saith: Do all your works in charity; this is the skill Thou hast in dealing with men, that Thou dost more weigh and esteem the will and beginning from whence the work proceedeth than the work itself. A man shall buy nothing that he seeth in shops for a piece of brass or copper; but if the King's arms be coined on it, and that it be current money, one may buy what he listeth. Our works are of so base a metal, that having not in them the royal arms of Thy heavenly grace, we get little or nothing by them, for we merit thereby only temporal goods; but if the arms of the King of Heaven be engraven in them, which are Thy grace and holy love, we may merit thereby life everlasting.

O inestimable gift of love! O precious treasure and sovereign good of so great virtue and power, that it is not only in itself a good above goods, and of price inestimable, but also maketh all other things of price and value. By this of earthly and vile that we are, we are made heavenly, and by this other base and simple works mount up to Heaven, and enter into the presence of Almighty God.

EIGHTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

OF THE END OF A TRUE LOVER OF GOD.

AS the end of things, although it be last in execution, is first in intention, so love, which, as the Apostle saith, is the end of all the commandments,* ought to be a thing that should go before in all that ever we do. For Thy sake, O Lord, it is the end that giveth the being unto all things, and my works shall be such as the last end and intention is wherefore I work them. Thou, O Lord, art He that saith, "If thine eye be simple, all the body will be clean; but if thine eye be evil, thy body will be full of darkness."† Wherein Thou meanest nothing else but to teach us that the end and good intention of a work is that which maketh it good or evil, when such a will and good intention is ruled and directed by Thy holy law.

* 1 Tim. i. 5. † St. Matt. vi. 22.

The last and perfect end that my soul should have ought not to be, nor ever shall be any other, but only Thy infinite goodness. I will willingly sacrifice to Thee, O Lord, and will confess Thy holy name, because Thou art good.* Shall I haply confess Thy name, and praise Thee for that Thou givest us money and makest us rich? No, but because Thou art good.

We love a man because he is good and virtuous, for very justice constraineth us to virtue, or rather virtue compelleth us to do justice, and to love one either because he loveth us, or for that we expect some commodity at his hands; and if either of these things be sufficient to cause us to love a man, how much more ought I to love Thee, my God, in Whom all causes of love do concur, if I have respect unto virtues and goodness. Who is more worthy to be beloved than Thou? Who so perfect as He from Whom proceedeth all perfection, and who so good as He that is sovereign goodness?

Whereby, O Lord, although Thou hadst never suffered for us, nor hadst created us, nor ever bestowed any benefits upon us, yet ought we to love Thee only in respect of Thyself; for that love is a natural inclination that we bear unto that which is good, so that by how much better the thing is, by so much more it is worthy to be beloved, and what thing is there better or more worthy to be beloved than Thou, my God? What good thing can I love that is not in Thee in a most high and excellent degree? What thing more beautiful or of greater perfection canst thou love,

* Psalm liii. 8.

O my soul, than thy God? Enlarge thou, therefore, thine heart, and extend thy desires as much as thou wilt, and all that ever thou art able, for in Him shalt thou find all fulness and to be satisfied. Thou oughtest to love Him only for that He is the chiefest good and infinite goodness, and therefore, if thou hast sinned, thou oughtest rather to repent thee because thou hast offended thy God by thy sins, than for the glory that thou hast lost by sinning or for the pains of hell that thou hast incurred.

If thou lovest God more than thyself, thou oughtest to be more grieved with offending Almighty God than with the loss and detriment that thou thyself hast sustained. Saul and David sinned; both of them were reprehended by two Prophets, and bewailed their sins; yet was David pardoned, and not Saul, because the one lamented for having offended God, and the other for having lost his kingdom. If thou do good works, let all thy study and endeavour be to seek to please and content thy Lord and God only, and that because He commandeth it and is thereby served, without pretending profit or commodity to thyself. Set Me for a mark upon thy heart. Sichem and his father, Amor, received circumcision, despising idolatry, which, although it were a good act, yet had it evil success because they were moved thereunto, not for the love of God, but through covetousness to possess the goods of the house of Jacob; as they plainly showed when they said unto the people, "If we circumcise our children, their goods and chattels shall be ours, and all that ever they possess." What availed, O Lord, the service that

these men did unto Thee, seeing that they gave Thee not their love? What though we give all that ever we have, if we give not our love? All gifts proceed of love, and when we give all that we are to him that we give not our love, to him we give nothing at all. The first gift that one giveth is love, and no man gave ever anything for love but that he first gave his love.

And when, as Thou, O Lord and our God, after Thy glorious Ascension, didst begin to lighten Thy Church with so many graces and benefits, the first thing that Thou didst was to send down Thy Holy Ghost,* Who was nothing else but love. Thou desiredst not, O Lord, that we should return unto Thee the grace that Thou hast bestowed on us, but the love wherewithal Thou hast loved us, loving Thee as Thou hast loved us,† and rendering love for love, and if Thou be wholly love, and that we ought to be like unto Thee, then must we be children and not servants. How can we be like unto Thee, and how can we be Thy children without love? In former times Thou wouldst be feared, because those base hearts of servants could not be raised to such generosity of mind as to love Thee, which is proper to brave minds and noble hearts.

We are not children of the bond slave, but of the free woman,‡ which liberty hath been given us by Christ. Let us lift up, let us lift up our hearts as free men, set at liberty that we may love our Deliverer and Redeemer, Who hath taken us out of the servitude and dark dungeons of sin,§ and brought us to His

* Acts ii. 2—4. † 1 St. John iv. 19. ‡ Gal. iv. 31.
§ 2 St. Peter ii. 4.

wonderful clear light. I cannot live without love, and therefore, of necessity, I must needs either love myself or something that is not myself. Within me there is no good thing at all, unless God be within me, and without me there is nothing worthy my love, and above me there is none but God, Whose image and likeness I am. He is wonderfully cold who is not warmed, exceeding hard who is not mollified, and passing unthankful who is not overcome with Thy holy love. The spirit of man maketh us men, and the spirit of Christ maketh men saints upon earth. The Spirit of God protecteth a true lover, who, through the virtue of an innocent life and holy conversation, walketh always firmly in the love and fear of God. He daily crieth out with the Prophet David, saying, "Create in me a clean heart and a right spirit; renew Thyself in my bowels." My will being truly obedient to God's Spirit, I cannot but fructify and increase in all virtues, and be protected from all evils, for this Holy Spirit directeth a man the right way, and bringeth him from the danger of every untruth and perilous passage into the port of salvation.

A good life bringeth a good end, and a good end ever produceth a good hope; for the love of eternal bliss consisteth in hope, from whence proceedeth amendment of life and the light of the soul, which being truly and perfectly effected, then is our hope illuminated and made warm in the love of God, expecting the remuneration, which is so great to those who love Him that hope cannot reach it, nor charity comprehend it, for it passeth all desires. It may

be sought for but not valued. So great is the reward of Saints, and so fortunate is the success of their holy and innocent life, that it cannot be measured, so much that it cannot be numbered, so copious that it cannot be determined, so precious that it cannot be esteemed. All the goodness that we do is to be attributed unto God, and not unto ourselves, as the Psalmist saith, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give the glory," for the glory of the victory is not given to the horse but to the rider, and, as the Scripture saith, the horse is prepared for the day of war, but our Lord giveth salvation.

To the true lover of God and observer of His commandments, shall be given these seven rewards, which are seven glories in Paradise; he shall have the clear vision of God without any veil, and in this vision consisteth all our bliss; he shall have a firm and sure possession, for he shall hold Him so fast that he cannot lose Him; he shall have perfect fruition, for the blessed soul shall perfectly enjoy God, and cleave unto Him irremoveably, and, after the resurrection of our bodies, our bodies shall be agile, that is, moved everywhere without weariness; they shall be impassible because they cannot suffer; they shall be immortal, because they cannot die; they shall be most clear, as our Saviour saith, "The just shall shine like the sun in the Kingdom of My Father."* O God Eternal, how sweetly and plentifully shall the faithful true livers and lovers of Thee be replenished and made drunken with the fatness of Thy house, because with Thee is the fountain of life, bliss, and glory.

* St. Matt. xiii. 43.

Eternal life is our end; let us therefore walk to this end in charity and purity of mind, loving God above all things, for he that loveth shall, consequently, love a true and perfect life, and have a happy and blessed end, which God of His great mercy grant unto us.

EIGHTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

OF THE GOOD SUCCESS THAT FOLLOWETH THE TRUE LOVERS OF GOD.

AS the forcible heat and beams of the sun cause the earth to fructify, so doth the love of God bring nourishment and inconceivable comfort to the soul. Experience giveth boldness not to despair of the good success that followeth a good action, as many to their comfort have often tasted, who know Thee, O God, to be a great and mighty Lord, Whose greatness knoweth no end, Whose immensity admitteth no measure, Who art the most true Lord, not as men lords, who buy their servants with bags of money, but such a Lord as hath bought His servants with His own blood. Behold now, the happy event of the penitent Magdalene, that, through her hearty and fervent love which she bore to her Lord and Saviour, merited through His most merciful goodness the remission of her sins, and became a most true lover and faithful follower of her beloved Master. Behold what happened to the holy Martyrs, both of the Old and New Testament, who by force of love gained the

crown of martyrdom, and were made worthy to reign with Christ and to enjoy life everlasting, for the exchange and loss of this their temporal and transitory being, a gain unspeakable, and a glory which the heart of man cannot conceive, the tongue of man cannot declare, nor the ear of man hath heard, what is eternally prepared and ordained for those who fervently love God. Behold the good success that Joseph had in Egypt. After he had been sold by his brethren, falsely accused of his mistress, slandered, and cast in prison,* God delivered him with great honour and made him lord of the land.† Chaste Susannah was a friend and lover of God, did that which she was bound to do, and, although by the world she was condemned to a cruel death,‡ when it seemed that her innocence was altogether oppressed, and her life and honour lost without hope of remedy, then came the succour and help from God, whereby she had such good success that she won thereby an honourable life, and everlasting fame and glory.

The like we read in Holy Scripture to have happened to the children that Nabuchodonosor cast into the fiery furnace in Babylon,§ and to Daniel, who was put into a den of lions,‖ all which and many others that I omit, the love which they bore unto their God delivered them from their dangers, and in all things they had good and prosperous success. The shepherds who loved God, and desired to see the Heavenly Word made Man, coming into Bethlehem the same night that our Lord was born,¶ to their great pleasure and content-

* Gen. xxxvii., xxxix. † Gen. xli. ‡ Dan. xiii. § Dan. iii.
‖ Dan. vi. 16; xiv. 30. ¶ St. Luke ii. 8.

ment, found the thing which they desired and longed to see, as it had been foretold them by the Angel, to give us thereby to understand that all things fall out well unto such as love God. Yea, further, if a man may so say, the friends of God are wont to take profit and commodity even by very sins, insomuch as, rising out of them by true penance, they become afterwards more humble, zealous, wary, circumspect, and more wise. David,* St. Peter,† and St. Paul,‡ were more holy after they had sinned than before they fell into sin, which good ought nowise to be imputed unto so vile a thing as sin, but unto the goodness and grace of God, Who reapeth good of our evil.

God would never suffer any evils in the world, if He meant not out of them to take much good, for there is nothing done in the world that is not in some point profitable to the universal good, so that all our good and evil, as well our own as of others, turneth to the profit of the good; but, contrariwise, unto such as love not God, although they seem to have some virtues, all things have such evil success, and fall out to their evil, and throw them down into hell. They, waxing proud in their virtues, extoll themselves on high that they may the more swiftly be thrown down, according as it is written, "Thou hast brought low such as have exalted themselves,"§ and again, "For extolling myself Thou hast stricken me."‖ Those who love God, all the world seemeth to smile on them, all creatures obey them, and they become mighty lords of all things, for, submitting themselves to the

* 2 Kings xii. 13. † St. Matt. xxvi. 75. ‡ Acts ix. 20.
§ Psalm lxxii. 18. ‖ Psalm ci. 11.

Lord of all creatures, they make themselves lord of all. But the wicked, and contemnors of Almighty God, nature herself seemeth to persecute, and all things created do abhor them. They are never without fear, never without pain, but they are always in dread, always in a thousand doubts, for the creatures on every side use cruelty against the wicked in revenge of their Creator, according as it is writtten, "The round compass of the earth shall fight for Him against the foolish,"* and who more fond and senseless than he who, by loving many possesseth all things, and for want of loving loseth all?

If the friendship of an earthly King be so great a matter that all men esteem it greatly, and think themselves much honoured thereby, how much more excellent a thing is the friendship of Thee, my God and Lord, and how much more honourable is it to be Thy friend? And it is in my power to obtain this friendship, for by loving Thee I may attain unto it. By this friendship there ensueth great honour unto me, according as it is written in the Psalm, "Thy friends, O Lord, are exceeding honourable."† If this be so, what is the cause, O my soul, that Thou goest wandering so astray, feeding thy heart upon the love of creatures, begging of them a few drops of muddy and unsavoury water, which increaseth thy thirst, and forsakest the clear and flowing fountain of all good, wherewith only thou mayest quench thy thirst? What canst thou desire that thou shalt not find full and wholly in Thy God? If thou delight in knowledge, He is most wise, for His wisdom hath no end.‡ If

* Wisdom v. 21. † Psalm cxxxviii. 17. ‡ Psalm cxlvi. 5.

beauty please thee, He is most beautiful, for He is more beautiful than the sons of men.* If power and strength, He is strong and potent, for our Lord is strong and mighty, a strong Lord in battles.† If delights and pleasures, His delights are in His right hand to the end.‡ If satiety and fulness, they shall be made drunken with the abundance of Thy house.§

And how then can I, knowing that there is all this and much more in Thee, my God, and that we obtain all these things by loving Thee, go wandering astray after the misery of creatures? As wax taketh any mark or figure of a seal that is printed on it, so doth my soul, applying it unto Thee, my God, by love, receive into it the form of Thy beauty, and as no beauty can be greater than the most perfect beauty, and that no point of beauty can be wanting in it, therefore the soul, being lifted up by love unto the most excellent and supreme beauty, shall enjoy the same singular beauty, and all other beauty shall seem but base and vile unto it.

Who is able to express, O Lord, the profit and commodity that my soul shall obtain by coming unto Thee by love? It doth participate and enjoy the infinite treasures that are in Thy Divine Majesty, and, by communicating Thy infinite goodness, Thou givest inestimable riches unto those who love Thee. Love causeth us to participate of Thine infinite wisdom, for love is the knowledge of the very heavenly wisdom. I know not wherefore we labour so much, and daily weary out ourselves for things of no value, seeing we

* Psalm xliv. 3. † Psalm xxiii. 8. ‡ Psalm xv. 8.
§ Psalm xxxv. 9.

may enjoy Thee, the Creator of all things, and with Thee possess all things. What then do we seek more, and what would we have? If I may so easily possess all good, wherefore do I, with so great labour and pains, seek after things which are full of calamities and miseries?

O Lord and my God, what do I but offer injury unto Thee, seeing Thou givest Thyself unto me so freely? Thou reapest no good nor commodity by being amongst us, and yet dost Thou so love to be with us that Thou sayest it is Thy delight.* Wherefore, O Lord, dost Thou love me so much, that Thou givest Thyself more willingly unto me than anything else that I ask and require of Thee? Thou knowest not how to give a little, and for that in Thyself Thou givest us all things, therefore dost Thou give us Thyself, for, to bestow this benefit upon us, Thou wouldst have us to love Thee. Only love is our possession, and to whomsoever we give our love, we give all that we possess, and if we lose this it is evident that we lose all that we have, and then do we lose our love when we bestow it upon one whom we ought not to bestow it upon.

Seeing, therefore, that all our weal or woe dependeth upon our good or evil love, it followeth that virtue is nothing else but a good love, and that vice or sin is nothing else but evil love. He is virtuous whose love is good, and they wicked and vicious whose love is evil. If I knew once that all my felicity consisteth in true and good love, having perfect knowledge thereof, I should forthwith understand what is all my bliss and

* Prov. viii. 31.

what is all my woe. This is my only good and precious treasure, which I ought to bestow upon none but Him Who is my whole felicity and glory. Oh, how great a good do I unto myself, and how profitable is it for me to love Thee, my God, seeing that by love I possess Thee, and possessing Thee do enjoy with Thee infinite good and riches without number.

EIGHTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

HOW GOD CALLETH US TO LOVE HIM.

THOU being, O my God and Lord, the sovereign goodness and infinite perfection, the Maker and Conserver of all things, and full of delights and riches, what meaneth it that Thou goest amongst the very creatures that Thou hast created, seeking for some one to love Thee, and canst hardly find him? Thou art He, O Lord, Who sayest in the Gospel, "If any man love Me, let him keep My word."* How is it, my God, and what meaneth this that Thou sayest, If there be any who love Thee? Is it possible that, being Who Thou art, there should be any who loveth Thee not? Oh, what a lamentable matter, what a wonderful shame is it for us, that God should go seeking some to love Him, and scarce find any? O blind people of perdition, and amongst so many of you as love the flesh, the world, and yourselves, is there not one who, turning his back upon such abominable things, worthy

* St. John xiv. 23.

to be abhorred, loveth the sovereign good and infinite goodness of our God? He Who is infinitely good, and consequently infinitely attractive, and infinitely worthy to be beloved, findeth so few who love Him, that He saith in the singular number, If haply there be any one who doth love Me.

And seeing, O my Lord and my whole bliss, that showing Thyself to all men what Thou art by the works of Thy hands, it is not sufficient to draw unto Thy love their rebellious and obstinate hearts, Thou bestowest on them many benefits, and promisest them everlasting bliss, to procure them to love Thee, and yet for all this none will do it, no, nor look upon Thee, for miserable mortal men have determined to look downward upon the earth.* I see that, in the Canticles, Thou entreatest, eggest, and provokest Thy creature to love Thee, saying, "Open unto Me, My love, My unspotted, and every way Mine. Open unto Me, and if thou wilt not open unto Me for My sake, yet, nevertheless, open unto Me for thine own cause, for My head is full of dew, My Divinity is full of all sweetness and delight."† "Open unto me, therefore, out of hand, and I will sup with Thee, and that not at thy charge, for I will be at all the expenses, and will set before thee most pleasant and delectable meats."‡ And the ungrateful soul, for all this, answered churlishly out of her bed, "I have put off mine apparel, and shall I now make me ready again. I have washed my feet, and shall I now foul them again." O unthankful, O miserable and blind wretch, dost thou answer thy Beloved and Thy God

* Psalm xvi. 11. † Cant. v. ‡ Apoc. iii. 20.

in this wise. Dost thou set so lightly thy Creator and true lover? Open, most miserable wretch, for thou shalt not make thy feet foul, but clean; it shall be no pain to thee, but ease; it shall not disquiet thee, but make thee glad and joyful.

This her most dear and tender lover left her not thus in her hardness of heart, but gave her a touch with His hand, wherewithal she who before made so light of His call, was now so inwardly stricken, and so vanquished and overcome with that touch, that she started up full of grief for to open to her Beloved, but He was now departed and vanished clean away, and that upon great reason, seeing that the fool had so malapertly and disdainfully rejected Him before. And then might you see the miserable wretch running up and down the streets and market-place, wailing and conjuring the daughters of Sion, if they found her Beloved, to show and declare unto Him her love. She seeketh Him and findeth Him not, she knocketh and nobody openeth unto her, she calleth Him and nobody maketh answer, and, therefore, most pitifully wailing, she wasteth and consumeth herself with love, she waxeth sick, taking just vengeance upon herself for her former hardness of heart, for as she before made light account of Him Who sought her, so maketh He now as little account of her who seeketh Him. He careth little for her who cared not for Him.

And thus art thou wont to deal, O Lord and our God, for Thou touchest us that we may know where Thou art, and Thou fliest away to cause us to seek Thee, Thou callest and hidest Thyself, Thou invitest and goest aside, Thou incitest and departest, and yet

art Thou no less loving when Thou goest than when Thou comest. Do we not see it many times fall out by experience, that when Thou followest a man a long time with inspirations, with benefits, with tribulations and afflictions, for to awaken him to Thy love, and to cause him to despise the world and follow Thee; and that when he, in the end, being overcome by Thy grace and heavenly inspirations, forsaketh the world, and all that ever he hath, for to follow Thee, Thou then hidest Thyself from him, who with fervent affection seeketh after Thee, leaveth him who loveth Thee, and vouchsafest not to hear him who calleth after Thee. But cease not for all that, my soul, cease not, faint not, and be not dismayed, run round about the city, conjure the daughters of Jerusalem, inquire of the citizens, desire the watch and warders to come forth and meet thee. They will help thee to make the more speed, and will put off thy old garment, that thou mayest run the faster, and when thou art a little past Him, without all doubt, thou shalt find Him Whom thy heart desireth. Pass by them and stay not with them, for they will not help thee, but hinder thee, and thou shalt be glad and rejoice. Then shalt thou take pleasure in all thy pains and travails past, then shalt thou cast off from thee all sorrow and sadness, and shalt enjoy thy desired felicity and beloved Spouse in His heavenly glory; thou shalt enjoy the everlasting fountain, which floweth from the deep sea of divine consolation, and comforteth and refresheth the heart that is burnt and inflamed in love. "Oh how great, O Lord my God, is the multitude of Thy sweetness, which Thou hast hidden for them

that love Thee;"* Thou hast hidden it because Thou hast laid it up in store, and not hidden it in deed. A thing that is hidden we are wont both diligently to seek, and being found, exceedingly to love. The desires and affections which Thou prolongest are not diminished, but increased; Thy love is not transitory, but eternal; they who love Thee are not lukewarm, but fervent and zealous. Thy love is not idle, the remembrance of Thee is sweeter than honey, and to think on Thee more pleasant than any food; to speak of Thee is sufficient refection, to know Thee is perfect consolation, to come unto Thee is life eternal, and to depart from Thee is death everlasting.

Thou art the lively fountain to those who thirst after Thee, and the food that never faileth unto those who are hungry of Thee; glory unto those who seek Thee, rest and pleasure unto those who find Thee. Thy sweet smell raiseth the dead to life, Thy sight healeth the sick, Thy light expelleth all darkness, and Thy visitation putteth away all sorrow and sadness. O my God and my glory, Thou hidest Thy treasure to stir up those who desire it, Thou keepest the pearl close to encourage the love of him who seeketh it, Thou prolongest the giving of it to teach us to ask it, Thou makest as though Thou hearest not him who asketh, to the end he should persevere. In this wise didst Thou hide Thyself to Thy devout disciple, St. Mary Magdalene, when she sought Thee amongst the dead, Thou being risen to life, to the end she might persevere seeking Thee; and, forasmuch as she persevered with hope, she merited thereby to find

* Psalm xxx. 20.

Thee and see Thee risen to life. O blessed sight, most pleasant and delectable, O exceeding joy and perfect pleasure, O amiable face and lovely look, O hope and happy perseverance. If she had not hoped she had not persevered, and if she had not persevered she had not obtained the fruit of her hope.

Seeing, therefore, O my God and my hope, that Thou so hidest Thyself from those who fear Thee, that Thou mayest be found of those who hope in Thee, and so departest from those who seek Thee, that Thou comest unto those who persevere, it is written, "They shall perish who depart from Thee,"* but they who hope in Thee shall not be confounded. Those who fear Thee hope in Thee, because Thou art the helper and protector of them.† By fear we come to love; Thou art to be feared as a Lord, and to be loved as a Father. Thy holy fear continueth for evermore,‡ for that it maketh the saints in whom it is perseverant. They want nothing who fear, for Thine eyes are always upon them,§ and Thine ears are ready to hear their petitions.‖

My mercy, my refuge, my Creator, my receiver and my Redeemer, so put in me Thy holy fear, that Thou deny me not Thy holy love; so hide Thyself from me that Thou mayest increase in me the fervour of affection, and so make me partaker of those who fear and keep Thy commandments, that by the servitude of fear I may come to the high degree of Thy heavenly love, in such wise, that my heart may burn for evermore in the fire of everlasting love.

* Psalm lxxii. 27. † Psalm liii. 6. ‡ Psalm xviii. 10.
§ Psalm xxxiii. 10. ‖ Psalm xxxiii. 16.

EIGHTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

HOW LOVE CARRIETH US UNTO GOD.

LOVE is a fire which burneth and inflameth my soul, and, therefore, in the dryness and thirst which I have after Thee, my God, Who art, as the Psalmist saith, the fountain of living waters,* my soul shall seek Thee with fervent affection. I thirst, and no continuance nor tract of time abateth my suffering; all other pains and labours are either by time diminished or clean taken away, but this waxeth every day greater, for that my soul, burning naturally in Thy heavenly love, never resteth nor taketh her ease till she come to behold her Beloved, delivered out of the veil of flesh which hindereth that noble and glorious sight. I will give no rest unto my heart, nor any kind of mirth shall enter into it, until such time as my love, being delivered and set free from the prison of this body, arrives to its centre, which is the clear vision of Almighty God, that maketh us blessed. A natural motion is more swift in the end than at the beginning, and, therefore, we see in all natural things, that the nearer they come by their motion to their end, the more haste they make, as, for example, in a stone that falleth from on high; and so fareth it with the soul that goeth unto Thee with loving affection, the nearer that it cometh unto Thee the faster it would run. And its desire and longing after Thee is incensed with the weariness of the way, insomuch that, the longer time it hath thirsted, the greater its thirst is;

* Psalm xxxv. 10.

and, therefore, the more plainly to declare my pain, I say that I have thirsted and longed after Thee, not meaning thereby that it is now past, for he who once longeth after Thee, unless he lose his sense and taste, shall never leave his longing, for the water of this fountain is so savoury, that in filling one it quencheth not his thirst, according as it is written, "Those who thirst after Me shall thirst again,"* and the desire being once fulfilled, it seeketh no other novelty, but contenteth itself with that which is always near to him who possesseth it.

It were not any great matter if the soul should desire Thee only because Thou hast converted all things unto Thyself, and that in such manner, that many times they seek Thee, and know not what they do, fulfilling their whole appetite in seeming something unto Thee, for that they have no more being but what it pleaseth Thee; but the reasonable soul, taught and instructed by Thee, goeth unto Thee as her supreme felicity, knowing that Thou art her beginning and her end. The waters that come out of the sea do never stay till they return to join again with their beginning, according to that which is written, "All rivers run into the sea, and the sea is never the bigger."† The rivers return to the place from whence they came forth, to the end they may run again; the sparks of fire mount up likewise on high, and never stay, but seek their sphere; and my soul, which by infinite power hath life, cannot stay until it arriveth unto the lively fountain. And this is it that my soul desireth to have, the fruition of Thee and Thy holy

* Ecclus. xxiv. 29. † Eccles. i. 7.

love, as the fountain of lively water which proceedeth from thee. It desireth to drink of running sweetness of that river clear as crystal, which issueth out from the throne of God and of the Lamb.* It desireth to have her fill of that bread which giveth life everlasting unto those that eat it,† and to enjoy her beloved in the house of her mother,‡ for there is no other blessedness but to know Thee, the true God, and Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, as He Himself witnesseth speaking of Thee. "This is life everlasting, that they know Thee only, the true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent."§ And how far much more is it, O Lord, to love Thee than to know Thee; the end is better than the means and the things that are directed to the end. "The end of the commandment is charity of a pure heart and of a good conscience, and faith not feigned;"‖ and if, then, it be blessedness to know Thee by faith, how far more blessedness and glory shall it be, O my Lord, to love Thee! Oh, that my will would follow my understanding without stay into this flaming furnace of the fire of love, that my soul might continually burn in the flames of love.

O Lord, if as it is common to the understanding to believe that Thou art the only Author of all good, it might please Thee likewise to impart unto the will some little taste of Thy heavenly delights, who would follow the false pleasures that the world presenteth? Oh, how few would be deceived with the delicacies, flatteries, and allurements of Dalila,¶ and how few would sleep so near to everlasting death in hell,

* Apoc. xxii. 1. † St. John vi. 59. ‡ Cant. iii. 4.
§ St. John xvii. 3. ‖ 1 Tim. i. 5. ¶ Judges xvi. 19.

sleeping as securely, and as careless of the danger wherein they live, as did the captain Sisara, having drank of the sweet milk that Jael gave him, which benumbed his senses, and caused him miserably to end his life with sudden death.

Oh, how few would that woman of the Apocalypse be able to deceive with her cup of gold, which, with a deceitful sweetness, giveth them poison to drink, and draweth so many after her with open mouths, if the tongue were touched but with one drop of water of this heavenly fountain of Thee, my God, that it might taste of Thy sweetness (for here on earth we cannot perfectly know it), there needed nothing else to make all things seem sharp as vinegar that tasted not of Thee, and everything more bitter than gall that savoureth of the world, or hath any taste or show of flesh and blood. All do long and thirst after Thee, and do seek the water wherewith to quench it, and therefore, because all men do seek their contentments, all do seek Thee; yea, even worldlings that care not for Thee. For there is no other reason why the thing that they pursue and follow should not be rejected and forsaken, but that there appeareth a little shadow of Thy goodness that Thou hast placed in it; not to the intent that they should forsake Thee for it, but to the end that thereby they might the better know Thee.

There is a difference, for those that are Thine do seek Thy waters in the lively fountain, and strangers unto Thee do fill themselves with the muddy waters of rotten lakes, which do quickly destroy them, whereof Thou complainest by the Prophet Jeremias.*

* Jer. ii. 13.

What is the cause of proceeding from the beginning to so contrary ends, but that Thine have tasted of the waters of Siloë, which run through the secret veins of Mount Sion, and issue out at the foot thereof, which, although they be not able to quench the thirst, yet are they sufficient to make us taste how sweet our Lord is; and, moreover, by washing us in this fountain, and touching the water, our eyes are opened in heavenly knowledge to understand Thy goodness and glory, even as his eyes were opened that was born blind.

There at the top Thy elect do drink in abundance, and do perfectly know Thee and seek Thee, not in a shadow, but face to face, and do lay their mouth to the fountain; but here on earth we are scarce permitted to moisten it; and yet remaineth there in the tongue such a pleasant taste with the sweetness thereof, that the thirst of Thee, which is renewed afresh, doth make it forget the former thirst, and it seemeth to know by experience that which Thy Son taught unto the Samaritan: "He that shall drink of the water which I will give him shall thirst no more."* That is, he shall thirst no more after that which he thirsted before, for the taste of true felicity expelleth all false tastes of worldly waters; yet shall not his thirst be quenched for all that, but the cause of his desire altered, and being better employed, shall increase more and more.

O fountain of lively water, and what manner of goods are these that we find in Thee? But why demand I this question of Thee? for if I were able to

* St. John iv. 13.

know them here on earth, they were not so many and so great as I imagine. Thou art the fountain that receivest of nobody, and givest bountifully unto all, as beseemeth Thy magnificence, and it liveth, for that Thy treasures never end, how much soever Thou enrichest others. Thou hast waters of life to make them immortal that come unto Thee, the waters of everlasting wisdom to enlighten the understanding of them that will drink of Thee, the waters of unspeakable delights to fill and satisfy the will that embraceth Thee, and the waters of infinite love, to inflame our hearts in Thy sovereign charity, and to glorify our souls in Heaven.

This Thy holy love it is that carrieth me unto Thee, the fountain of lively waters, and my soul is moved and stirred up to go unto her centre, where she may rest and repose herself for ever, and be never able to be removed from her beloved Bridegroom. Thou hast drawn me in perpetual charity, having mercy upon me.

EIGHTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

HOW THE LOVE OF GOD AWAKENETH OUR MEMORY.

SEEING that I cannot fly from myself, nor altogether leave me, I will use this remedy during the time of my peregrination, always to think and meditate on Thee. If I forget Thee, then let my right hand forget me; and let my tongue cleave fast to the palate of my mouth if I do not always remember Thee.* All the damage that I receive by consideration of mine own evils and wickedness, is repaired by memory of Thy present mercy and goodness. It may much better be said of the remembrance of Thee than it was of the remembrance of King Josias, that it is sweet as honey in the mouth, as delectable as music at a merry banquet, for there is no pleasure comparable unto it. The remembrance of Thee causeth such sweetness, that with it I may denounce the bitterness of my sins, for if I see myself weak and frail, I call to my mind Thy omnipotence, and do see that with Thy virtues Thou overcamest the strength of the world. Thou hast chosen that which the world holdeth for folly for to confound the wise, and frail things for confusion of the strong, and base and contemptible things of the world, of small account and value, for to destroy things of great price, that no man might have cause to vaunt and glory in Thy presence. By the hand of a simple woman Thou abatedst the pride of Holofernes, general of the army of the Assyrians, as after the victory that holy and

* Psalm cxxxvi. 5, 6.

valiant woman, Judith, giving thanks, did sing unto Thee: Our omnipotent Lord hath destroyed him, and delivered him up into the hands of a woman, and confounded him.* The strongest and mightiest among them was not slain by the hands of lusty youths, neither were they sons of Titan that did it, nor huge and mighty giants that resisted him, but Judith, daughter of Merari, that destroyed him. No more wouldst Thou, O Lord, overcome the tyrant Pharao with lions, bears, or tigers, but with gnats, frogs, and flies, which are vile and little creatures. Thou didst put the great strength of Samson in his hairs, which are weak and tender things;† and the power and virtue of preaching the Gospel in base and simple fishers, by the which Thou hast brought the whole world in subjection unto Thee.‡ I will not be discomfited therefore, O Lord, of Thy mercy and omnipotence, although I feel myself weak and frail, and good for little,§ for Thou art able of stones to raise up children of Abraham,|| and with weak and simple things to work Thy wonted wonders. If I find myself unsettled, and not resolved touching the disposition of my life, I call to mind Thy unspeakable providence, which so sweetly on the one side, and with such certainty on the other, proceedeth with that which it hath determined.

Thus didst Thou miraculously direct and govern the people of Israel in the desert for the space of forty years, feeding them with bread from Heaven.¶ Thou providedst for Elias,** and for Jonas in the

* Judith xiii. 19. † Judges xvi. 17.
‡ St. Matt. iv. 18. § 1 Cor. i. 27. || St. Luke iii. 8.
¶ Exodus xvi. 35. ** 3 Kings xvii. 6.

whale's belly,* and for the Prophet Daniel in the lions' den.† If the sins that I commit daily present themselves unto me, I am to remember Thy immeasurable good, and am here to stay mute and silent, and to think how, at the time when nobody was able to help me, Thou, O Lord, didst give me Thy hand, when my hands were occupied against Thy commandments. In like manner Thou calledst from Heaven Thy persecutor Saul,‡ even then when he went actually putting himself into the fire of Thy wrath and fury by persecuting the Church.

I have many times fled from Thee, and Thou hast met me in the way, that I might not lose myself, for Thy mercy hath prevented me, and Thou hast invited me with peace, being unworthy of it, setting me down conditions more to my avail than I could have required. Thus receivedst Thou, O most merciful Lord, the prodigal son with a kiss of peace and hearty love, going forth to meet him in the very way; and vouchsafedst to be invited of Zacheus, the chief of the publicans, and justifiedst him, and gavest health to his household.§

If I see in myself any want of good works, I am to call to mind the treasure of infinite merits that Thou hast left to be imparted to Thy members. In Thee are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God.‖ If my sight and mine own shape do trouble me, I am to think upon Thee with steadfast meditation, and my soul is to recreate herself in Thee, which was so much afraid of herself. The remembrance

* Jonas ii. 1. † Daniel xiv. 37. ‡ Acts ix. 1.
§ St. Luke xix. 5—9. ‖ Coloss. ii. 3.

that the prodigal son had of the great store and abundance that was in his father's house, and the great goodness that he conceived of his father, did minister unto him wings and force to rise up out of sin, and with tears to sue for mercy at his father's hands. If I cannot enjoy Thy blessed sight, yet will I rejoice in the remembrance of Thee, and comfort myself therewithal. For if in temporal love, we esteem the remembrance of our beloved in their absence a great pledge and token of love; how far greater shall it be in him that loveth Thee truly, and knoweth that the absence is only on our part, and that Thou art never wanting unto any, much less unto him that feeleth and is sorry for thine absence? With the sweet remembrance of Thee my life is maintained, calling to mind, O Lord, how longsuffering Thou art at our wickedness; how patient in expecting, how merciful in receiving, how loving in pardoning, and how liberal and magnificent in Thy bountiful promises.

The remembrance of Thy benefits doth bind me to serve Thee, the love that Thou bearest me enthralleth my heart, and the glory of Thy Majesty inflameth my will in heavenly desires. I desire, O Lord, so much for to see Thee, that I feed and entertain myself in having any little of Thee, according to the saying in the Psalm, "I have called God to mind, and have taken delight and pleasure;"* and I would it might please Thee, O Lord, that I might rather forget all my worldly cares than that I be unmindful of Thee, for it is a very lamentable thing that my thoughts and cogitations should wander any other ways, seeing they

* Psalm lxxvi. 4.

may be employed wholly upon Thee. When I feel the straitness of this habitation, I cannot tell how to walk, but in the remembrance of Thee, and with it the affliction which this present time causeth me is much eased and lightened. The remembrance of Thee is the garden where I gather the sweet roses, when I call to mind the favours and blessings I have received at Thy hands; it is my orchard, wherein I find so rare ripe fruits, which are certain tastes which Thy elect do feel here on earth as tokens of that which they shall receive in Heaven, although they are but fruits that grow in the shadow, and therefore not thoroughly ripe, yet are they of pleasant taste, according to that which a devout soul saith: "I did sit in the shadow of my beloved, and the fruit was very pleasant to my palate."* Not to my lips, that is, to the senses; but to the inward spirit, which is meant by the palate. Here met I with green and large fields, when, considering Thy great power, and all that Thou hast promised me. I hope it shall be easy for me to follow and hold on the course I have begun, being helped and assisted by Thy grace.

And although the consideration of Thy servants be fed with many good things, yet above all other, my spirit doth find most comfort and delight in Thee, and therefore will I always remember Thee so long as my memory shall be able to execute the office, and that my eyes cannot see Thee, and so long as my pilgrimage here on earth shall continue, until such time as I come to drink of that river that the Prophet speaketh of, saying, "The stream of the river doth

* Cant. ii. 3.

make joyful the city of God, the Most High hath sanctified His habitation."* Here shall the powers of my soul arrive to the top of their perfection, where the memory shall serve for no other purpose but to represent and show our estate past, that the present may be the more pleasant, and that our understanding and will may have perfect fruition, the one without veil or cover to hinder, and the other without all fear.

EIGHTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

HOW THE LOVE OF GOD DRAWETH US TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM.

THE more that I love Thee, O my God and my Lord, the more clearly I see Thee, and therefore love doth many times precede and prevent knowledge, for although I love Thee, O Lord, because I have known Thee, in that the will cannot be moved to anything that the understanding comprehendeth not nor conceiveth; yet is that much more that I have learned by loving, and that which love hath discovered of Thy divine perfections, than all that which my understanding taught me at the beginning.

Contemplation followeth love as a thing more excellent and perfect, and what perfection is comparable to the contemplative understanding. The will, as mistress and guide in the kingdom of the soul, commandeth the understanding to seek out knowledge, which is her perfection. Love excelleth science,

* Psalm xlv. 5.

and is far above knowledge. God is many times more beloved than He is known, and love entereth in and cometh unto the presence of God when knowledge standeth without the door. And no marvel, for love presumeth more and trusteth more, it pierceth everything, and followeth the violent course of her fervent desire, that cannot dissemble, nor ever stayeth till it attain unto the thing that is beloved.

Love pierceth all the inward parts, and searcheth out the deep secrets of God. There is no good that is perfectly known, if it be not perfectly beloved. Ye that fear God, love Him, and He will enlighten your hearts. Love followeth contemplation, and maketh it perfect, although it be impossible for a thing to be beloved if it be not first known. The nearer that the lover is unto the beloved, so much the more truly, simply, and profoundly he knoweth it. The operation of love exceedeth that of the understanding. Love fetcheth deep sighs for God, it having always a burning desire and fervent affection after God; unto which high excesses the understanding is not able to aspire, but only uniteth our soul with God. Contemplation is, then, perfect when he that contemplateth is elevated and lifted up to the love of the things whereupon he contemplateth.

It behoveth thee, therefore, O my soul, that thou mount up in contemplation, elevating not only the understanding, but also the affection and will, to the love of thy Spouse, Jesus Christ. It is requisite that not only the understanding work, but also that the will do love and be not idle. Love is fervent and sharp in contemplation of heavenly things, for a true

lover is not content with the outward shape only of the beloved, but laboureth as much as possibly he may, or is able, to pierce into the inward thoughts of his heart and the secrets of his soul. Love pierceth and entereth many times where natural knowledge standeth without, as we read of some Saints that being not learned in natural sciences, but obtained mystical divinity with the high and mighty power of their spirit, pierced the heavens, exceeding in wisdom and natural knowledge, arriving to the true knowledge of God Himself. Whereupon the Psalmist admonisheth us, saying, "Come unto God, and you shall be enlightened."* No man can come unto Thee, my God and Lord, but by love, for he who loveth Thee is not far off from Thee.

Very well, therefore, saith the Prophet, that we must come unto Thee by loving Thy Divine Majesty, and that we shall be lightened in knowledge of Thee, for thy love is a fire without smoke, that lighteneth and teacheth the understanding to know Thee more and more than it did at the beginning, when, through the knowledge that it had of Thee, it began for to love Thee. The love of the world darkeneth the understanding, it troubleth reason, and dulleth the judgment, but thy holy love sharpeneth the wit, instructeth the soul, and discovereth great treasures of Thy divine perfections. Whereupon came it that the youth Joseph could interpret the dreams of Pharao's baker and cupbearer, as also the dreams of the King of Egypt himself, but only by the love that he bore Thee? He was enticed by his mistress to offend

* Psalm xxxiii. 6.

Thee, and would not yield nor give consent unto sin, because he loved Thee; and hereby he came to know secrets, and was able to declare things to come.

It is not marvel if he that walketh out of Thy grace and love, do fall into blindness and errors. He knoweth much, indeed, that knoweth how to love Thee. He only is wise, O Lord, that loveth Thee, for all other, as ignorant and blind, do walk in darkness. Thou art He Who sayest, that he that followeth Thee walketh not in darkness, but that he shall have the light of Heaven.* And who followeth Thee but he that loveth thee? In the celestial hierarchies, the inferior Angels are lighted by the superior, as the highest heavens do turn about the lowest with their motion. The Seraphim, which are next unto Thee in glory, do wholly burn in Thy love, and are flames of fire enkindled in Thy holy love; these do lighten the Cherubim, which are next unto them in the second degree, which are full of knowledge and wisdom, according to their name of Cherubim. The great love of the Seraphim is poured out into the science and knowledge of the Cherubim, for by loving Thee we come to great knowledge Who Thou art. How great things, O Lord, Thou dost reveal and declare unto those that love Thee, and what a number of secrets do they know that by love are come unto Thy Divine Majesty.

Moses put himself in this scorching fire when Mount Sinai burned where Thou wert, and in the midst of that fire Thou gavest and taughtest Thy

* St. John viii. 12.

Law.* From the fire where Thou spakest unto him, he descended perfectly instructed what to do himself, and what he should teach the people for to serve Thee aright. What tongue is able to express all that he knoweth of Thy goodness, and understandeth of himself, who, by loving Thee, and giving himself unto Thee in prayer and contemplation, doth wholly commit himself into the hands of this Thy holy love. Then knoweth he how sweet it is to converse with Thee; he knoweth what the world is, and the small virtue of all things here on earth, and understandeth what Thou art, and tasteth of the sweetness that Thou givest unto those that come unto Thee.

When Thou sentest down the Holy Ghost from Heaven unto Thy Church, He came upon the Apostles in tongues of fire,† for to kindle and inflame in love the breasts and hearts of those Thy holy disciples; and as the property of fire is, not only to heat and make warm, but also to give light and to shine, so didst Thou not only give them Thy holy love, but also the gift of wisdom and understanding, for so soon as they were inflamed in love, they were presently filled with learning and knowledge, and spake divers languages. Whereupon one of the Prophets spake thus: "Our Lord hath sent fire into my bones from Heaven, and hath taught me."‡ This Saint, O Lord, saith that Thou hast sent the fire of Thy divine love from Heaven, and that Thou teachest him upon whom Thou bestowest it, for Thy holy love doth not only inflame, but also instruct. Oh, what a light of divine brightness doth that soul enjoy that

* Exodus xix. 18. † Acts ii. 3. ‡ Lament. i. 13.

cometh nigh unto Thee, and how exceedingly is the understanding of him that loveth Thee replenished with the knowledge that love discovereth of the infinite goods that are in Thee. O my Redeemer, and the sweetness of my life, I present here my heart before Thee. It desireth to come unto Thee, but cannot of itself; perform Thou that, O most loving Father, that of itself it is not able, receive me within the compass of Thy love. I ask, call, and seek, and seeing Thou givest me grace to ask, grant me to receive; Thou givest me grace to seek, cause me to find; Thou teachest me to call, Lord open to him that calleth. Come unto Thy God, O my soul, embrace thy Spouse, Jesus Christ; be importunate with Him till He give thee this holy love, that by loving Him thou mayest know Him, and by knowing Him mayest love Him for evermore.

EIGHTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

HOW THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD BRINGETH US TO HIS LOVE.

ALTHOUGH many times we love Thee, O Lord and our God, and love discovereth unto us Thy divine perfections, and we know Thee because we love Thee, yet if we be cold in loving Thee, and do not cast ourselves with violent force into this sea of love, that by loving Thee the bright beams of Thy infinite goodness may reflect upon our eyes, and void of the knowledge we ought to have of Thy Divine Majesty, the fault of not loving Thee, and the cause that we have such a coldness in our hearts, proceedeth of that we have not the consideration and knowledge that we ought to have. For as we see by experience that the cause of temporal love is corporal beauty, so is the contemplation of spiritual beauty the cause of spiritual love. Hereupon it cometh, O Lord, that I love with such affection the things that I see with my corporal eyes, and that I love Thee, my God, so coldly, for that I consider not Thy beauty, which is infinite goodness, having so many things that might lead me to the knowledge thereof, how blind soever I be. If I desire perfectly to love Thee, and to give Thee my heart and my will in earnest, I will shut my eyes, that they may see no vanities, and will open my understanding, that it may behold and search out Thy infinite goodness and most excellent love that Thou bearest me.

It were a marvellous matter that knowing Who Thou art, I should not run through the mountains and deserts, inflamed in Thy charity, and wounded with Thy love, crying out and saying with the spouse, "I am sick for love."* It were a marvel if I should not have a fervent desire and great thirst to serve Thee, my God, whereupon should grow a resolute determination most willingly to keep Thy commandments for ever. I have inclined my heart for to keep Thy commandments at all times, which are the ways of Thy justifications; although my life were to continue for ever upon earth, yet would I resolutely determine to keep Thy commandments for ever.†

Oh, how great good doth he feel that purposeth in in this sort, and that offereth his soul to Thy perpetual service, and observing of the commandments of Thee, my God. He that loveth Thee, keepeth Thy commandments,‡ and he that loveth Thee not, doth not keep them. If any man do not love Thee, without doubt it proceedeth of that he knoweth Thee not. Looking up with mine eyes like the phœnix upon that clear Sun of Justice, which the Prophet Malachias said should be born for us, and considering the brightness of Thy sovereign goodness, and the glittering beams of love that by so many benefits Thou hast showed us proceeding of the infinite love that Thou bearest me, I will clap the wings of my burning desires until I be wholly inflamed in love and consumed into a worm and ashes.

O immeasurable goodness of Thy goodness, and how can I possibly contemplate upon this depth of

* Cant. v. 8. † Psalm cxviii. 106. ‡ St. John xiv. 21.

perfection, and not burn in flames of love? How is it possible that my understanding, being employed in discovering so great goodness, beauty, and wisdom, and representing these perfections unto the will, she should for all that remain weak, wavering, and cold in Thy service? How is it possible that my will should not love Thee, and like a burning firebrand be wholly inflamed in Thy love, when the knowledge that I have of Thee doth show unto her so many great and sovereign goods? If the meat that my will eateth and tasteth, and the food wherewith she is sustained and made fat, is nothing but goodness, and that she naturally inclineth and is affectioned to nothing that is not good, how can my will, how cold and hard soever it be, leave loving the chief and most perfect good, which art Thou, my God, being infinite goodness and eternal love, and most worthy every way in the highest degree to be loved?

In these considerations and contemplations of what Thou art, I will spend the dead time of the night, lightening my understanding with the knowledge of Thy Divine Majesty, that I may say with the Prophet, "The night is my light in my delights:"* light to my understanding, pleasant delights to my will, and very sweet to my soul. By these contemplations and meditations of what Thou art, the poor man is enriched with charity, and without this knowledge and love every rich man is poor. He that is enriched with this Thy holy love is strong amidst hard and difficult passions; he is very cheerful in good works, and doth not the good that he worketh with a froward look and

* Psalm cxxxviii. 11.

frowning countenance; he is not troublesome amongst his good brethren, and is patient amongst false brethren; he showeth himself cheerful with Abel offering sacrifice unto God,* and with Noe declareth the great security that he hath in adversities and tribulations, for when all the whole world was drowned in the universal deluge, just Noe was preserved in the bosom of heavenly love.† And what a faithful companion, then, is Thy holy love in this peregrination.

I consider what the great Patriarch Abraham did, who departed out of his country, not knowing whither Thou wouldst carry him, accompanied with Thy holy love, and he travelled very safely in strange nations and kingdoms that knew him not.‡ I consider, O Lord, the cheerfulness that this Thy holy love causeth, to suffer any injuries, how grievous soever they are, as we may see, for example, in Moses, who being many times injured and persecuted by his rebellious people, did patiently suffer all through his great love and charity.§ We shall also find David, being accompanied with this holy love, full of meekness in all his persecutions and injuries;‖ and we see the valour and courage that was in the three children in the furnace of Babylon, and how they entered without fear into that flaming fire,¶ which their love made sweet and tolerable. With Thy holy love I shall be able to live a most pleasant life in this vale of tears, whereof it is written, "That love is strong as death;"** for as death killeth the body, so the love

* Gen. iv. 4. † Gen. vii. 23. ‡ Gen. xii. 1. § Numb. xvi. 22.
‖ 1 Kings xxiv. 7. ¶ Dan. iii. 24. ** Cant. viii. 6.

of everlasting life killeth the desires of temporal things.

I am not able, O Lord, to utter in words that so pleasant a life as is passed without desires and affections of this present life, and all that is therein, for the bitterness of this world thrusteth in her sweetness, making all things of this world seem unpleasant unto them that the love of happiness hath put alive in the joys of Heaven. This being so, what is the cause, O Lord, that men forsake Thee, and do love vanity and seek lies?* Hereof Thou complainest by a Prophet, saying, "What naughtiness have your fathers found in Me, that they should forsake Me and follow vanity?"† As a perfect, wise, rich, and noble gentleman might justly complain if he were forsaken and despised of his wife for a foolish, filthy, poor, and base person, even so dost Thou complain, O Lord, seeing that a soul, Thy spouse, forsaketh this infinite goodness and treasure, where innumerable riches and perfection are heaped up, for the dung and love of the earth.

O my God, O infinite goodness and beauty without end, Whose riches are infinite glory, forsaking Thee, I follow the vanities of my sins, depriving Thee of the love that I owe Thee, and placing it upon the lies of this life; upon covetousness of the flesh, upon false riches and vain honour of the world. There is no fault in Thee, O Lord, but all the weakness is mine, and the whole fault and perverseness in me alone, when I leave off to love Thee, my God, Who art my whole bliss, being, and wisdom, the true bridegroom

* Psalm iv. 3. † Jer. ii. 5.

of my soul, and the clear fountain, beauty, and glory.

Thou art He Who sayest, "Ye men of Juda, judge between Me and My vineyard, what could I do more for My vineyard, or wherein was I angry with it, and what could I have done more for it that I have not done?"* Have I not made Myself Man and died for to give it life? Wherefore dost thou forsake Me, My spouse, seeing I have created thee to My image and likeness, and redeemed thee with My Blood, and yet dost follow after vanity? Compare all that the world hath given or promised, compare the delights and pleasures of the flesh and riches with that which I give thee at this present, and have promised thee, and thou shalt see how vain thou art in following vanity. "It is a proverb and a common saying, that if a woman depart from her husband, and join with another, there is no means to return unto him again, because she hath made herself unclean and defiled in adultery."† I, thy God, am not of this condition, although thou be of that other; thou hast committed adultery with thy lovers, thou hast sought out and accomplished thy wicked desires, and yet will I not despise thee if thou turn unto Me. Turn unto Me henceforth, and call me Father.

* Isaias v. 3, 4. † Jer. iii. 1.

EIGHTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

THAT LOVE ASPIRETH TO SEEK OUT AND DESERVE GREAT THINGS.

IT is a very natural property of love to lift up itself to love and desire things that are more high and more excellent than the will wherein it grew, and from whence it proceeded, as we see for example in other creatures inferior unto man, which always aspire to other things that are greater than themselves. We see that the elements convert into plants, and plants and grass into living creatures, that do eat them, beasts into men, for by the flesh of them we are nourished and sustained. So likewise our will, that it may not seem to be of worse condition than things that are far baser than itself, is naturally bound to love things that are more noble and excellent than itself, that it may be transformed and converted into them. Seeing that it is in her power, and there resteth nothing else but to desire it, and because there is nothing more excellent than the will of man but God Himself, it is meet and great reason that if it will do that which it ought to do, and will follow the property of her own nature, that first and principally she love God, for that being united unto Him by this love and union, she is made one self same thing with Him, according to that which the Apostle saith, "He that cometh unto God by love is made one spirit with Him." *

Wherefore, seeing it is a very vile thing for the will, which is queen in the city of the soul, to abase herself

* 1 Cor. vi. 17.

beneath her degree unto baser things, it ought by reason to lift up herself above herself and to love God, and to transform herself into Him by love, seeing that He is the chief, eternal, and most noble good, out of Whom the soul cannot better herself though she love all the creatures in the world and possess them.

Let us fall then to an account, O my soul, thou and I, and let us see what thou hast gained by so much time lost and evil spent as thou hast applied on the world. What has become of so many years evil spent? What has become of all the days that are past? What fruits and profits dost thou reap by all those things whereof thou art now ashamed? In loving things of the earth thou hast loved things that are less than thyself, and hast given thyself, being the spouse of Jesus Christ, and a very noble creature, for vile dung of the world. Thou oughtest to be ashamed to see other creatures far less than thyself, excel and confound thee, for all of them do naturally seek their perfection, and do mount and aspire to greater things, and are transformed and converted into better things than themselves; and thou alone, silly wretch, art so miserable that, contrary to all thy natural inclination and the nobleness that God hath put in thee, thou changest thyself into that which was given thee for thy service; setting that above thy head which the Creator of all things would have to be under thy feet.

Lift up thine eyes upright, open the eyes of thine understanding and consider from whence thou art fallen, and into what a miserable state thy perverse and wavering will hath brought thee. Learn to know thy worthiness and the honour wherein He placed thee

that made thee of nothing. Let there be growing in thee a kind of holy pride in esteeming of thyself as thy nobleness deserveth, and hold it a reproach to bestow thy love upon any but only upon God. That noble appetite that God hath put in thee inclineth and leadeth thee unto this, and He would have thee to find no perfect delight and contemplation in anything here on earth, that necessity might lift thee up unto Him that can never fail thee; thou shalt then enjoy the honest and sweet embracements of the Bridegroom, and shalt be transformed by love into thy God; for if love do transform the lover into the beloved, thou being converted by love into God shalt be deified in Him, according to that which the Prophet saith of those that fear God, "I have said ye are gods and the sons of the Most Highest."* Herein do we see the great charity of God and how much love is able to do which maketh us to be called the sons of God, and to be so indeed;† "and if we be sons then are we heirs, heirs of God, and companions in inheritance with Jesus Christ."‡

And wherefore then, O Lord and our God, seeing we are according to our sensual appetite and corrupt nature so great lovers of temporal honour, worship, and worldly estate, should not we be also of the true honour and worship that our soul obtaineth, when loving Thee she is converted into Thee by love? This is the holy pride, the true ambition, and the just pretence that I ought to have with such a lofty mind and high thoughts that I should disdain to set my love upon any besides Thee, nor to enthral my heart

* Psalm lxxxi. 6. † 1 St. John iii. 1. ‡ Romans viii. 17.

with anything but only with this unspeakable and most excellent beauty, this infinite goodness, sovereign perfection, and divine majesty. "What should I desire in Heaven or in earth but only Thee?" * My times are in Thy hands,† and let me forget myself if I put not the joy of Jerusalem at the beginning of all my joy,‡ and prefer not the love that I bear unto Thee, my God and my King, before all the other mirth and pleasure of Babylon. What hast thou to do with the earth, O my soul, being created for Heaven? What hast thou to do with the vain and false love of this world, and with these momentary and corruptible pleasures, being elected to have fruition of heavenly and everlasting joys in glory? All the glory of the King's daughter§ is not outwardly in the possession of creatures, but inwardly in the secrets of a good conscience, for our comfort is the testimony of our conscience, which is beset within with a variety of many and divers spiritual consolations.

"Hear, O thou daughter, and see, incline thine ear and forget thy people and the house of thy father."‖ If thou knowest not thyself, O thou most beautiful of all women, depart from the love of the world wherein thou liest now, and from the sins wherein thou art entangled, and follow after the footsteps and tracks of thy herds of cattle, that is, by imitating the memorable and worthy examples that the Saints of God have left unto thee, feeding thy desires, nourishing thy thoughts, and maintaining thy purposes, which being mutable of themselves do skip like young kids about the sheep-

* Psalm lxxii. 25. † Psalm xxx. 15. ‡ Psalm cxxxvi. 6.
§ Psalm xliv. 14. ‖ Psalm xliv. 11.

cots of those shepherds which as holy Prelates and good Bishops have governed the Church and built it up by their virtuous life and good manners.

Lift up thy love to greater things than thyself, set thy thoughts upon that which shall never have an end, and love the thing that thou mayest love for ever. For this is to better thyself, to rise high, and to become of power, augmenting and exalting that which thou art already.* It behoveth me, therefore, my God, my Lord, and the Redeemer of my soul, that I love not nor desire any other thing in Heaven or in earth, but only Thee, seeing Thou art my honour, my glory, my salvation, and my whole bliss, and that I cast off all other strange and foreign love as contrary to my honour, and enemy to all my joy and salvation. For seeing love is a thing so noble, so free, and of so great power that it changeth and transformeth the will into the thing that is beloved, and bringeth it under the government and commandment of the same, it is an unseemly and filthy thing that anything that is more base and less worth than the will which is so excellent, should have sovereignty over her and possess her; and forasmuch as my love is spiritual and like unto the will whereof it proceedeth, therefore are all corporal things unworthy of it, and cannot deserve it, in that being spiritual it is better than them all.

Thou wilt not, sayest Thou, O Lord, that we give that which is holy unto dogs, nor that we cast pearls unto swine,† and therefore it is not reason that I give this precious pearl and inestimable jewel of my love unto any but unto Thee, my God, for that Thou alone

* Psalm lxxii. † St. Matt. vii. 6.

art worthy of it. I ought not to love anything that may be seen or heard, or with any of the corporal senses can be conceived; and forasmuch as it is not meet nor agreeable to reason that one equal should have rule or sovereignty over another equal, hereupon no will created is worthy our first and chief love, nor to have dominion over our will, and therefore I will not set my love upon reasonable and insensible creatures, for that my love is spiritual and they material, temporal, and corporal: nor captivate my will with any other reasonable will, the one being as good as the other. And therefore Thou, my God and Lord, being the Creator of all things and not a creature, Thou only art most worthy and deservest best the possession of my will, and to have rule and dominion over us, and to enjoy our first and principal love.

And further, having right and sound judgment and perfect knowledge of ourselves, do we only, O Lord, owe unto Thee our whole love, and are bound to love none but Thee. But also there ought to be a kind of proportion and likeness in love, loving Him with all my whole heart and power that hath loved me with all His, and by all means, and so by giving Him that little which I am able, I satisfy for the great deal that I owe, desiring to love Thee, my God, my Creator, and my whole bliss.

EIGHTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

THAT HE WHO LOVETH NOT GOD, OFFERETH INJURY UNTO HIM AND HURTETH HIMSELF.

SEEING that love transformeth the will into the thing that is best beloved, and putteth it under her seignory and dominion, thereupon it cometh that the will cannot mount any higher, nor extend any further, than that thing that is best beloved extendeth; whereupon it followeth that if the thing that is best beloved be universal or particular, the like will love be; and as there can be but one thing best beloved, so can there not be in the will any more than it loves wholly. I may manifestly know, O my Lord, that he whom I love with my chief and principal love, foundeth and buildeth in my will a special love, which is the head and beginning of all other affections that spring of the will, out of which, as from a root, ariseth a tree in the soul, which multiplieth and spreadeth into so many boughs as there be things in the best beloved, that in it and for it may be beloved. Of one stone or kernel groweth a tree, with many boughs, leaves, and fruit, that come of it; so, if my principal love be good, just, and rightly directed, all other loves that proceed thereof shall be just and good; but if it be evil, the rest consequently shall be naught. Whereupon it also followeth that of necessity we most love all things that are like and agreeable to this thing that is chiefly beloved, and hate and abhor of force all things that are contrary and repugnant unto it. Of all which aforesaid I conclude that inward and deep love

joineth the will with the thing that is principally beloved, and that so strongly that he cannot be separated from it by some greater and better thing succeeding and taking the place of that which was first beloved.

But when Thou, O Lord and our God, art the thing that we love first and most, being the most perfect good, the most excellent virtue, and eternal truth, the love wherewith we love first must needs be strong, eternal, true, and perfect. And whereas all things, O Lord, do spring and flow from Thee as from their first beginning, and all of them are jointly together in Thee, according to the order of Thy divine providence, he that first loved Thee must of necessity love all Thy creatures in Thee and for Thee, and this love must be made so wide and large as Thou showest Thy love ample in making all the creatures that thou createdst of nothing, albeit Thy love is infinite and ours limited. In the state of matrimony the husband commandeth and the wife obeyeth, and she cannot marry with another so long as her husband liveth. In like manner the will, which is, as it were, the wife, subject and obedient to the thing first beloved, cannot have but one love and one thing beloved, as a wife can have but one husband; so long as that thing first beloved lasteth it cannot be separated and divorced from her husband so long as he liveth. And as a woman that is married to a wise, beautiful, noble, and rich man liveth honourably, rich, and contentedly, and, contrariwise, is discontent and dishonoured when she is married to a fool, sloven, or to a base and infamous person; so, likewise, our will

is prosperous and honoured according to that which she first and principally loveth, for if she set her love, and marry as it were, by loving things that are noble and good, she bestoweth it well and is thereby honoured, but, contrariwise, if she love vile and earthly things, she becometh contemptible and reproachful.

Look therefore now, my soul, where thou placest thy love, and what is that thou lovest, for thou art like unto it whereunto thou hast given and addicted thy will. When thou lovest God, thou art much honoured by so rich and noble a Husband as is Jesus Christ, and in loving the world thou hast a poor, ill-favoured, infamous, and base husband. Love converteth thee into that which thou lovest. Nabuchodonosor, for that he loved his sensual appetites as beasts do, did feed upon grass in the mountains.* Of some, that forsake the love of their Creator and set it upon the vile abominations of the earth, the Apostle saith, that "they have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of a corruptible image of man, and of birds and of four-footed beasts and serpents."† In these monstrous shapes thou transformest thyself when, leaving the love of the Creator, thou disorderly lovest the creature.

Oh, how base and vile thou becomest in reiterating thy wicked ways. Leave off, then, this earthly love, and behold how much more honourable and rich thou art in marrying thy will by love unto such things as are excellent, heavenly, and shall continue for ever. As a maid that is married conceiveth presently a love

* Dan. iv. 30. † Rom. i. 23.

to her husband, by virtue whereof she wisheth well unto all the friends and kinsmen of her husband; and if that husband die, and that she marrieth with another, the first love forthwith vanisheth out of her heart, and all other loves that thereupon grew and were caused, and there springeth up a new love, which is likewise the root of many other loves. The like fareth it with our will, which, when it loveth God, is honourable, rich, and floweth in goods, and loveth for the love of him her neighbour, as a kinswoman and friend of her husband; but when she forsaketh God, and taketh a mere worldly love, contrary to the heavenly divine love, she then loveth these vile things, with all their filthiness and abominations; and as a woman cannot have two husbands at one time, so cannot one will have two loves, but only one principal love, wherewithal it loveth God or some creature, for it is impossible to love both alike, and with a chief and principal love. Of all creatures that is specially beloved of the will, that is most near, and hath greatest resemblance unto it; and for that the will is able to turn and convert her own love into herself, hereupon it cometh that she loveth herself more than any other creature, because there is nothing more nigh and dear unto it than it is to itself; and therefore, when thy heavenly love is not the first and principal in the will, then must of necessity the love that she beareth to herself be the chiefest. And hereupon it cometh that when I love but Thee, my God and my Lord, above all things, I presently love myself and mine own will; but the will that principally loveth herself, and maketh herself her stay and foundation

without God, then she loveth herself, for she loveth all other creatures secondarily for her own sake, and in them all loveth nothing else besides herself. So the will that principally loveth herself hath Thy holy and divine love as accessory. Such a will as this is wicked, traitorous, thievish, and devilish, for with a sacrilegious hand she robbeth Thee, O Lord, her Maker, as much as she is able, of Thy glory, honour, and eternal power; for to love one's own will with chief and principal love belongeth only to Thee, O Lord and our God, and no one else ought to do it. Hereupon were the Angels thrown down from Heaven, and Thou sayest, O Lord, that Thou sawest Satan fall from Heaven as a flash of lightning.* And so it followeth that when human will loveth chiefly herself it robbeth Thee, O Lord and our God, and attributeth to herself that which Thou oughtest to possess and is properly Thine own, and no one's else. And man maketh himself god, as much as in him lieth, when he giveth unto himself the praise, honour, love, and glory that belongeth to Thee only as to his God and Creator; and so by this means he becometh Thy mortal enemy and far unlike unto Thee when he attributeth unto himself only the things that of right belong unto Thee.

And if the lover be like unto his love, it is manifest that the love being ill or false, with hatred and contempt of Thee, such a man must needs be evil and false, and despised and abhorred of Thee, O Lord, as Thy enemy and wrongful usurper of Thy divine perfections. Wherefore, that I may not fall

* St. Luke x. 18.

into the deep pit of so great abominations and miseries, I will love Thee, my God, and my hope and the sweetness of my life, above all things, withdrawing from these inferior and earthly creatures; for seeing it is the property of love to requite love again, our will ought to love nothing whereof it may not be beloved with greater love than that wherewith it loveth; for no man will give a good thing, but for a better; and forasmuch as all creatures inferior unto man cannot return love for love, our will ought not to love them, but Him only we ought, as much as we are able, Who payeth and requiteth our limited love, that hath end, with His infinite eternal love without end.

NINETIETH MEDITATION.

OF THE CONTRARIETY THAT IS BETWEEN THE LOVE OF GOD AND SELF-LOVE.

THY holy and divine love, our God and Creator, is the root and foundation of all good, and self-love is the fountain of all evil. Thy holy love doth make us Thy friends, Thy children by adoption, and heirs of Thy eternal bliss; Thy holy love doth lighten the understanding, inflameth the will, cheereth the heart, enkindleth our desire, maketh our labours and travails sweet and pleasant, and giveth merit to our good works; it guideth us in our peregrination, and teacheth us the way to Heaven; it comforteth us in Thy service, quieteth the conscience, maketh it secure, and recreateth the inward parts of the soul. It is

the very life of it, it bringeth us to the safe port of Heaven, it maketh us inhabitants of eternal bliss, companions of the holy Angels, and perpetual citizens of the celestial Jerusalem, which is Thy glory. And, contrariwise, self-love is the foundation of all evil, the depth of destruction, the death of the soul, the executioner of an evil conscience, the torment of reason, and the very cause of man's utter damnation.

Thy holy Apostle, speaking of the hurts that come of self-love, saith that in the latter days "there shall come dangerous times, and that men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, lofty, proud, blasphemous, disobedient to their fathers, ungrateful, wicked, without love, without peace, full of sin, incontinent, without meekness, without benignity, traitorous, stubborn, high minded, lovers of their delights and pleasures more than of God, making a show of godliness, but void of virtue." *

Of all these evils, by the Apostle here set down and rehearsed, self-love is the root and foundation, for so he saith at the beginning, that there shall be men lovers of themselves; and then he recounteth all the evils that follow among all that whole rabble of vices and and sins in that mortar of Babylon, which is infernal confusion, and the machine or frame of all vices and evils, as the love of God is the foundation whereupon is built the celestial Jerusalem, which is the heavenly glory, with all good, virtues, and merits.

Two loves have built two cities; the love of God even to the contempt of ourselves, and the love of

* 2 Tim. iii. 1—5.

ourselves even to the contempt of God. When our soul loveth God earnestly, as she ought to do, she cometh wholly to a contempt of herself and a denial of herself, and this is that celestial city Jerusalem, builded upon the love of God; and, contrariwise, when a naughty and wicked man doth much love himself, he buildeth the infernal city of Babylon upon his self-love, and he extendeth his power even to the contempt of God.

We are to consider two ends, whereof one is God, and we ourselves are the other. The will standeth in the midst, and as a thing the more it draweth unto one extreme, the further off it goeth from the other, so by how much more our will cometh near unto God, by so much it departeth further from ourselves, and the further it departeth from ourselves, the nearer it approacheth unto God. Thereupon it followeth that the more that a man loveth God, the less he loveth himself, seeing that the will, in coming nigh unto God, departeth far from himself; and consequently, the more that a man loveth himself, the less he loveth God, for that the will, in coming unto him, departeth from God. And the will may come so close unto the miserable soul by self-love, that it may forget God altogether, and through the same love may be so near unto man, and so far off from God, that it may fall into an utter contempt of God, according as it is written, "When wickedness doth come to the depth of wickedness, it groweth to contempt;"* and, contrariwise, in the good the will may approach so nigh unto God by loving Him, and depart so far from

* Prov. xviii. 3.

self, that the just man may come wholly to condemn himself.

This we see by experience in many Saints of great perfection, who have been so transported and converted into God by love, that they have forgotten themselves, and as men beside themselves, have so forgotten all things here on earth, that they have seemed rather men of another world than of this, and therefore the world held them for fools and madmen, seeing that they gave not themselves to the sensible things of the earth; and one of this number was the holy Apostle who saith, "I live, and now not I, but Christ liveth in me."* The feet of the soul are love, and love carrieth us wheresoever it would go, and by love it is carried unto God or to the world, and love carrieth us to the Creator or to the creature.

Self-love doth separate it from God, and carrieth it unto man to his loss and hindrance; and the love of God doth separate it from man, and carrieth it unto God to His honour and commodity. The one love carrieth our soul to her Spouse, Jesus Christ, and the other love maketh her captive and bondslave of the devil. And as these two loves are in themselves very contrary and repugnant, so are there two contrary hatreds and detestations in them. There accompanieth and followeth the love of God, a kind of hatred whereby we are bound to detest all that which is contrary to the honour of God; for as the love of God and self-love are in themselves contradictory and extremes, but the hatred of ourselves and the love of God are not contrary, but

* Gal. ii. 20.

stand well together, and are to the salvation of man; as also self-love and the hatred and abhorring of God are not contradictory, but may accord together, and are to the destruction and damnation of man. And hereupon it cometh that he who departeth from self-love passeth unto the love of God as from contrary to contrary, and he that departeth from the love of God goeth presently to the love of himself; and likewise, in departing from self-love, he giveth himself forthwith to the love of God, and departing from God, he entereth into the love of himself. And although it be true, O my Lord and my God, that I may detest and abhor myself, that is, my sensual life, for that it is full of sin and infirmity, yet is it not possible, O Lord, that Thou, in that Thou art God, and in respect and consideration of the deity, shouldst be hated or abhorred of Thy creatures, forasmuch as Thou art the *summum bonum*, and infinite object of goodness and very goodness itself. And albeit we say that Thou art hated and abhorred of the malice of our perverse will, yet not in respect that Thou art God, and infinite goodness, for that is repugnant and contrary to the nature of our will; but as Thou art Judge to chastise our sins, or inasmuch as Thou hast power to punish our offences. For how is it possible that our will should not burn in flames of love, setting before her eyes so great a good? My will is carried with the violent force of Thy love, for Thy holy love maketh her just, holy, humble, and gentle, and self-love maketh her unjust, proud, and haughty. Thy holy love maketh her quiet, sweet, and amiable, and self-love maketh her

unquiet, loathsome, contentious. One thing amongst others whereof this holy and divine love is praised and magnified, and self-love condemned, is that the love of God may be universal; so may it be one self-same and alike in many men, although they be infinite, which so long as it continueth among them they must of all necessity live in peace, and concord, and in great contentment, the one at the perfection and felicity of the other. But when a man chiefly and principally loveth himself, then he seeketh forthwith his own particular honour and glory, his private gain and profit, his delights and pleasures, defaming any other man's honour to maintain and defend his own, and then beginneth he to murmur and grudge at other men's good, and think that he is a cross and hindrance to his own, and hereupon grow anger, envy, hatred, and enmity, and all other sins. The love of God is such a noble thing, that it doth not only admit company in loving, but further desireth that all should do the same. He that loveth God would have all men to love God, and desireth to draw all the world to His heavenly love. And so we see that he who is devout to any one Saint, would have all men devout to the same Saint that he loveth, for spiritual love is charitable, and comprehendeth all men.

The King and Prophet, David, in whose heart this holy love burned, inviteth all men to love and praise God, not only young and old men, and maidens, and Angels, and reasonable and intellectual creatures, but also the heavens, the sun, moon, stars, light, waters, earth, dragons, fire, hail, ice, mountains and little hills, trees and cedars, beasts, cattle, birds, and serpents,

and all other insensible and unreasonable creatures.* If this Thy perfect and holy love were rated in our hearts, my God and my Lord, we would desire nothing else but that all the veins, arteries, and all other parts of our body should continually praise and bless Thee, and that the grass of the fields, and whatsoever else Thou hast created, both night and day should praise Thy holy name.

This, Thy divine love, is not envious, but very noble and honourable, and, therefore, through the perfection thereof admitteth company in love, and would have all men to love Thee; but far contrary to this doth self-love, being in all points contrary to Thy holy love, which for that it is base and vile desireth to be alone, and admitteth no company in loving. He that selfishly loveth any woman, would have no body to love her but himself, no nor to speak with her nor look upon her, yea, and many times hereupon there fall out hatreds, contentions, and open enmities betwixt these vain and foolish lovers.

O noble, divine, and heavenly love, come unto my soul, and send Thou it, O Lord, from the throne of Thy glory into my bowels, that expelling self-love which disquieteth and tormenteth me, I may cheerfully love and serve Thee with joy as Thou deservest to be served and loved.

* Psalm cxlviii.

NINETY-FIRST MEDITATION.

OF THE FRUITS AND PROFIT OF THE LOVE OF GOD, AND OF THE HURT AND DAMAGE OF SELF-LOVE.

LOOK well about thee, therefore, now, O my soul, in whose power it is to plant in thy will the one of two loves, that is the love of God or self-love, for as there can be but two chief loves, and those in themselves very contrary, so can there come but two sorts of fruit of them, and those so contrary as are the works from whence they proceed. And forasmuch as in all the works that man worketh, there remaineth no more unto him in the end but either pleasure or sorrow, which is the whole gain and fruit of all his labours and travails; these two therefore only, that is pleasure and sorrow, are the final fruits and rewards of all human works: for all that ever man doth is to get joy and pleasure, which being once obtained, he seeketh no further.

True pleasure is the good and perfect fruit of man, the special fruit of the love of God; and true sorrow is the very evil and rotten fruit of man, and this proceedeth of self-love. And as God is immortal, potent, bountiful, good, and wise, so the pleasure that cometh by His love unto our will hath all the self-same properties; and look how far this love extendeth, so much is the pleasure that groweth thereof enlarged and multiplied. And therefore, as the love of God extendeth to all creatures, and principally to our neighbour, which is the image of God, so he that loveth God conceiveth infinite pleasures by infinite

creatures, and principally by those that he knoweth to be nearest and most dear unto his Creator.

And not only here in this place of banishment, O Lord and my God, shall I obtain true pleasure and inward joy by loving Thee, but also in the life to come shall obtain unspeakable joy by obtaining the fruition of Thy supreme felicity, and by seeing those that I have here loved in charity jointly enjoying Thy divine essence with me, for as Thy holy love here in this life extendeth to our neighbours, so shall they all in Heaven be partakers of Thy pleasures, which is the fruit of this Thy divine love. In that blessed Kingdom, where all is love and perfection, every one shall love another as much as himself, and therefore must needs take as great pleasure at another's felicity as at his own. And seeing we shall there find innumerable men and Angels whom we shall love as ourselves, and consequently take as great pleasure at their felicity as at our own: hereupon it is clear and manifest that the pleasure which we shall receive by the bliss of others shall be many thousand times more and greater than that which we shall enjoy by our own proper felicity in that most happy and blessed estate.

And seeing no man shall then be able fully to conceive the greatness of the pleasure of his own bliss, how little soever it be, I now many times think with myself, O my God, how shall I then be able to apply myself to receive that which shall be presented unto me in respect of so infinite joys and immeasurable glory of all other blessed Saints and every one of them? It must needs be, then, that every one

shall be there so full of joy that they can hold no more, as a vessel that is brimful to the top.

And, moreover, forasmuch in that bliss every blessed creature loveth Thee, my God, more than himself, and all others as himself, it followeth that he shall receive more joy without comparison of Thy bliss and glory only, than of his own and of all the other blessed Saints together. Behold now, then, my soul, what immeasurable joy the love of God will yield thee after this life. And the body shall not be altogether void of this pleasure, for the soul which in Heaven loveth God and her neighbour, loveth also her body which she desireth to have renewed and restored unto her, that the whole man may wholly possess a blessed life. And seeing the soul desireth to have the body restored, undoubtedly it shall be restored, for, as David saith, "Our Lord will fulfil the will of those that love Him, and will hear their petitions."* Then shall my joy, O Lord, be perfect, complete, and full, which no man, as Thou sayest, shall be able to take from me.†

These, then, are the fruits that proceed of Thy holy and divine love, and these are the goods that spring of Thy sovereign and most noble charity. Look now, then, my soul, whether it be meet or no that thou love thy God and Lord, seeing that this love is the cause that thou leadest here on earth a good and pleasant life, and after this life shalt enjoy such excellent fruits as are in Heaven, if thou love with all thy heart thy Spouse, Jesus Christ, whilst thou livest here on earth. And, contrariwise, of the most perverse and wicked love of ourselves springeth a false and vain pleasure, very

* Psalm cxliv. 19. † St. John xvi. 22.

short and momentary, which vanisheth in an instant, and leaveth behind it intolerable grief and vexation in the soul, and carrieth it headlong in the end into hell fire. As of the love of God springeth life everlasting, so of self-love springeth hellishness and abominable death, where death, as the Psalmist saith, shall be food to the damned,* for that they shall die and never cease dying, as a man may chance to crack a nut that outwardly seemeth sound and good, and yet filleth his mouth full of dust because it is worm-eaten and rotten; so falleth it out unto us, O Lord, in the fruits that self-love doth yield unto us when tasting of the delights and vain pleasures of the world, which in outward show seem pleasant and true, and are inwardly very bitter and unsavoury.

The fruits of self-love are vague and brittle, of which the Apostle spake unto some that had tasted and tried them: "What profit had you by the thing whereof you are now ashamed?"† The fruit that our soul gathereth of Thy divine and holy love is to make it firm and constant, indivisible, and of perpetual force and vigour, free, and subject to no creature; but self-love maketh it moveable, inconstant, weak, divided, timorous, cowardly, and subject to all manner of vanity. This holy love maketh it rich, full, and abundant in all goodness; and self-love maketh it poor, vain, haughty, and void of all good. This divine love bringeth forth a pleasant and profitable fruit to our souls, for it maketh her to dwell in her own country, and in her own house, and in her own kingdom; but self-love driveth her into exile, maketh

* Psalm xlviii. 15. † Rom. vi. 21.

her a stranger and fugitive, and bringeth her in bondage under Pharaoh. This divine love lighteneth and cleareth the understanding, that man may thoroughly know himself both within and without, and his God in the degree that is granted unto him, and all other creatures; but self-love is dark and obscure, it dimmeth the understanding, shadoweth and darkeneth the will, in such sort that man cannot perfectly know himself, nor his God, nor any other creature.

And for to conclude these good and evil fruits that proceed of these two loves, behold, O my soul, the effects of the one and the other, and thou shalt see how contrary they are in all things. The love of God would have many to assist her and bear her company in serving and loving God, as we see in Moses, who as a lover and friend of God, demanded of God who should aid and assist him, and so God gave him his brother Aaron.* And at another time he required more helpers in his divine service, and God gave him seventy more.† So likewise our Lord joined Ooliab with Beseleel, who was a good man, in work of the tabernacle.‡ Blessed St. Martha, as a holy woman that had the love of God in her heart, requested our Saviour to command her sister Mary to help her in serving of Jesus Christ, and she complained of her because she would not help her;§ for this holy virgin would have had all the whole world to have been busied in serving the Redeemer of the world.

Thus those that love God, not like men that pretend and seek their own profit and commodity,

* Exodus iv. 13. † Numb. xi. 16. ‡ Exodus xxxv. 30, 34.
§ St. Luke x. 40.

but only the honour and glory of God, do desire that all men should love and serve God; but self-love doth the clean contrary, for in that it seeketh its own private profit it would have all for itself, and therefore a self-lover would not have another to be in favour of the Prince or King, but he would be alone, and would execute all offices himself alone, for that he seeketh more his own profit and honour than he respecteth the good service of his lord or master. Charity, saith the Apostle, seeketh not her own private profit.* And if Thou, O Lord, descending from Heaven unto earth, didst seek nothing but me, nor didst not traffic Thine own gains, but my weal and profit, wherefore, O my God and my Saviour, shall I not love Thee with very true and earnest affection, seeking only Thine honour and glory, forgetting myself and all that is mine? Seeing, therefore, there proceed so good and pleasant fruits of Thy holy love, and such wicked and damnable fruits of self-love, I will love Thee, O Lord, with all my mind, with all my heart, and with all my strength, that I may enjoy the goods and benefits that proceed of that noble love both in Heaven and in earth.

* 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

NINETY-SECOND MEDITATION.

HOW THE SHORTNESS OF THIS LIFE INVITETH US TO THE LOVE OF GOD.

THIS short and painful life that here I lead saith unto me, O Lord, that I should love Thee with all my affection, if I weigh well and consider the eternity of the life to come, where I shall have everlasting rest or perpetual torment. And behold, with all the shortness and misery of this corruptible life, how can I possibly enthral my heart in those things which being not yet come, do vanish in a moment, and separate it from the love of that which continueth for ever. Although all the whole life that I live here on earth were pleasant, prosperous, joyful, and accompanied with all kind of recreation and pastime, yet only in respect of the shortness thereof, and seeing that we reap no fruit of her vain and false pleasures, I ought to dislike it, and set my love only upon Thee, and upon that blessed life that shall never end.

And how much more, then, ought I to do it, seeing this life of man is so full of pains and miseries through the whole course thereof, insomuch that in this point we see ourselves more toiled and afflicted than any other living creatures that want reason. The hard life that the people of Israel led in Egypt, made them to call upon Thee and to desire the land of promise.* As soon as man is born, he beginneth to weep, and in the care of his life the cold distempereth him, the heat afflicteth him, the fire burneth him,

* Exodus ii. 23.

water drowneth him, the earth yieldeth him labour and travail, diseases weaken and torment him, griefs and sorrows pine him, poverty vexeth him, and riches procure him cares; his life is short, and death lieth always in wait for him. And why then, seeing myself environed with so many griefs and vexations, and that far more than the persecuted Israelites ever suffered in Egypt, or those captives that bewailed their banishment on the rivers of Babylon?*

Why do I not, I say, call upon thee, my God, and desire my liberty and the land of promise, remembering the celestial Jerusalem, and seeing myself captive and banished in this vale of tears? Why do I not despise this temporal life, and love the life that is eternal? Considering with myself all my life that is past, I find in my reckoning that all the pleasures thereof are less than a tenth part of the pains thereof. The miseries that here torment us enforce us to seek Thee, and to desire Thy divine presence. Thus did that holy King David many times call upon Thee when he was persecuted and afflicted; and thereupon he saith in the Psalm, "I have called upon our Lord in my tribulation."† What can my heart see to take delight in, in all these earthly things, seeing all of them thrust me off from themselves and send me unto Thee? The labours and travails of this life say unto me that I should seek the true heavenly life, and the care and anguish of my mind that love of earthly things procureth me, doth admonish me to love Thee alone, my God and Lord, my only bliss, and the refuge of my soul. The heart of that unhappy

* Psalm cxxxvi. 1. † Psalm cxix. 1.

Prodigal Son never suffered so many miseries, nor was ever so beset with anguish, need, and tribulation, as my disquiet and troubled soul is afflicted and oppressed when it is entangled in the love of the world; but when I turn unto Thee, my soul is lightened with a new light. At all times when earnestly despising and abhorring this glory and pomp of the world, I come to love Thy Divine Majesty, I find in myself an unwonted pleasure and inward joy which Thou dost communicate unto such as love Thee.

O miserable men, and unhappy creatures, wherefore do you seek your delight and pleasure in abominable and sensual filthiness. Come and see how sweet our Lord is, and how pleasant and delectable His conversation. Oh, if it were His will that you had tasted but a little of the delicate conversation of Jesus Christ, how willingly would you then loathe and abhor all the pleasures and consolations that the world yieldeth. Leave off then, my soul, leave off these vanities and deceivable trifles that thou lovest, and come unto thy God by love, for one drop of the consolation of our Lord is more sweet than mighty deep pits of worldly pleasure. The love of any creature cannot long continue, all vanisheth in a moment, and decayeth in the twinkling of an eye; but the love of our Lord continueth for ever.

And why, then, wilt thou set thy love upon things that will so quickly leave thee? Say not as Aaron did,* that thou canst not make a feast unto thy God in sadness, nor love Him amidst so many travails, for

* Lev. x. 19.

these sorrows and tribulations which here thou sufferest, are but strokes that Almighty God giveth thee with the hammer of adversity, to strike out of thy heart, as out of a flint stone, the sparkles of fire of divine love. Our most merciful and loving Lord, seeing that with benefits thou art nothing mollified, but rather that thou waxest hard as flint, striketh thy heart with sorrows to draw out of it the fire of love. Thus dealt he with Manasses, King of Juda, who not converting himself unto God for the manifold benefits bestowed on him, He gave him strokes of adversity, whereby he returned unto God, being in prison in Babylon, and in his tribulation loved his Creator.*

But if the shortness of life and miseries thereof do not move thee to love thy God, in Whom there is an everlasting and blessed life, yet let the pain and punishment move thee which they shall suffer in hell that love not God. Let those extreme cold snows move thee whereof Job speaketh, and expel from thee the snow of thy cold and frozen heart. And let those burning flames of fire of the fury and wrath of God move thee to burn in the amorous and pleasant fire of Jesus Christ. If in these temporal and visible things there be not true and permanent love, and that one cannot love the thing which he cannot see, perpetual misery shall ensue unto him that findeth not some love which may continue.

No man can be blessed without love, and it is certain that he is miserable who loveth not something. He not only cannot be called happy, but not so much

* 2 Par. xxxiii. 12.

as a man, who forgetting all humanity and despising the sweet company and conversation of men, loveth himself with a solitary and miserable love. Charity is a free love that passeth unto another, and therefore no man can be said to have charity with himself, because love must extend unto another. He is an evil creature that taketh his love from God, and from his neighbour, and setteth it wholly upon himself. Thou hast given us, O Lord, a painful life, to the end we might love Thee; for Thy friends do desire to be delivered from the lumpishness of flesh, that they may love Thee freely, and without impediment.

The Apostle calleth himself miserable, and desireth to meet with one that would rid and deliver him out of this body of death, and although bodily griefs are cause of sorrow, yet they who have some taste of the Holy Spirit feel not so much what happeneth to the body as what the soul loseth or omitteth to gain. Although all men feel the griefs of the body, yet Thy friends, O Lord, differ from men of the world, for worldlings abhor them because they account them evil, but they seem sharp unto Thy friends because they are impediments unto them, that they cannot freely apply themselves unto contemplation and spiritual exercise, and they make no account of any other hurt that they do them but this; and for the rest, when it is ordained for the good of the soul, they pass it over as a light matter.

The thing that maketh this life miserable is the continual danger wherein our whole estate and fortune standeth, through the manifold enemies round about, with all sort of weapons of worldly vanities, that seek

and desire our death, and the small force that is on our part to resist them; and, which is worse of all, that our soul is left alone to defend herself, and that so alone, that those which are of her own house do make her the greatest war, and do always work treason against her, that she should make her watches, all which are so firmly assailed, that when she thinketh to prevail on the one side, the enemies enter on the other, either through the negligence of the watch, finding them asleep, or else that the soul, being beguiled by them, doth yield them the keys. Insomuch that the danger we live in is as long as our life, which is, as it were, a bloody battle or continual hunting, wherein they make a thousand chases and pursuits upon the soul.

Wherefore, O Lord, seeing myself so persecuted, the only remedy that I have is to cast my watery wailing eyes up to Heaven, and to sigh and desire Thee, my God, being that true and perfect life where Thy people shall rest in beauty of peace. The desire of that life hauleth away my heart, and the love thereof draweth me after it, and the pains and travails of this life do raise up my soul to love Thee, my God and Lord, as the true life of my soul, my whole repose and refuge, and only bliss.

NINETY-THIRD MEDITATION.

HOW WE OUGHT TO LOVE GOD FOR HIS LONG SUFFERANCE OF US.

WE are much bound to love Thee, O my God and my Lord, seeing the long sufferance that Thou hast used, and still usest, in bearing with me, expecting my conversion. As often as I have sinned, I have, as much as in me hath lain, crucified again, as the holy Apostle saith, Thy only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,* for He died to save me from death, and yet do I daily offend Thee. Thou hast commanded the sun and the moon to give me light, the earth to yield me food, the Angels to guide and defend me, the plants and trees to bring forth fresh fruits to feed me, and all the creatures of the earth to serve me. When the children of Israel offended Thee with their murmuring, and complained as unthankful creatures, for that in delivering them out of Egypt they wanted food in the desert, then Thou commandedst Moses to throw a piece of wood into the salt water, which presently became fresh and sweet, and withal didst send down bread from Heaven to his incredulous and rebellious people.

O Lord, how much dost Thou bear with unthankful and obstinate sinners, and how worthy art Thou to be beloved, seeing Thou requitest and revengest the injuries done unto Thee by showing favours and bestowing many benefits upon such as offend Thee. The earth is full of Thy mercy;† Thy mercy hath

* Heb. vi. 6. † Psalm xxxii. 5.

peopled Heaven, and Thy goodness and mercy hath shined even in hell itself, for Thou punishest the sins of the damned far less than they deserve. Who are they so proud and hard-hearted that love not so great mercy and goodness? Whose bowels would not melt within them at so exceeding great mercy and gentleness? Thou expectest those that offend; Thou sufferest patiently the injuries that are done unto Thee, forgiving them their sins, yea, and seeking them first Thyself, and requiring pardon for them.

O my most merciful Lord, how can I choose but love Thee, seeing Thou art so patient, and bearest so much with me? When Moses besought Thee to show unto him Thy face, Thou madest answer, "I will show thee all good," and declaring what was all good, Thou saidst, "I will have mercy on whom it pleaseth, and I will take pity on whom I think good."

Behold then, my soul, what manner of riches, goods, and treasures, these of thy God are, that is to be merciful and clement, insomuch that to have mercy upon us is all the good that He useth towards us. He saith not to be a judge, to be wise, or of power, but to be merciful and gentle. Thou takest no delight, O Lord, in that which concerneth Thy profit, but in that which is commodious and expedient for us, and therefore Thou commandedst Moses to make a propitiatory. We read not in the Scripture that ever Thou appointedst any house of justice where to punish the wicked, but a house where to pardon their sins, as was the same propitiatory in the Old Law, and now are many churches throughout Christendom in the law of grace wherein sinners are converted

unto Thee. Thou commandedst also the people of Israel to appoint certain cities of sanctuary, wherein the murderers and sinners might fly for succour and be free from justice.* And in that marvellous vision when Thou showedst Thyself unto Moses on the mount, and wentest round about him, this holy Saint, well knowing Thy manifold perfections and virtues, doth praise and magnify Thee for Thy mercy alone, saying, "O Lord our God, merciful and gentle, patient, and of much mercy, and true, Who layest up in store Thy mercy in millions, and takest away our wickedness, sins, and offences."† In all this Thou showest, O Lord, how exceedingly Thou lovest us, and how much more Thou desirest to pardon than to punish us, and even when Thou dost chastise us, Thou art mindful of Thy mercy.‡ The ten tribes of Israel, which Thou didst chastise by suffering them to live in captivity, Thou didst also comfort by giving them many Prophets; and when Thy people of Israel, murmuring against Thee, and despising the land of promise, would return into Egypt, Thou didst threaten them for punishment of their great sin, saying that they should not enter into the land of promise,§ and yet afterwards, laying hands on their weapons to fight against their enemies, Thou saidst unto them, "Go not up to fight against them, for I am not with you, and fall ye not before your enemies."§

This is a marvellous thing, O Lord; if Thou wert not with them, why didst Thou not will them to enter into the war, that they might be slain and perish in

* Numb. xxxv. 11. † Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7. ‡ Hab. iii. 2.
§ Numb. xiv. 42.

it? And if Thou wert with them, why didst Thou say unto them that Thou wert not with them? Thou wert with them, and Thou wert not with them. Thou wert not with them to cause them to vanquish and overcome their enemies, and Thou wert with them to keep them from being overcome and slain. O unspeakable mercy and infinite goodness, Thou punishest the sins, and succourest and defendest the sinners. Thou showedst Thyself angry and displeased with them, and yet Thou preservedst them from the hands of their enemies. In like manner, O Lord most merciful, Thou dost chastise our sins and vices, and conservest our life; after such a sort Thou art angry and offended with us that Thou succourest and defendest us for all that from all our enemies, even like a mother who whippeth her child, and yet, if she should see him in danger of death, would put her life in any peril to save the life of her child whom she tenderly loveth. Thou dost chasten us, O Lord, one way as a most loving mother. And yet, such is Thy goodness and mercy, that seeing us in danger of death, Thou hast suffered death to deliver us from death, and hast lost Thy life to give us life. Of these Thy great and infinite mercies the Prophet Isaias spake at another time: "Our Lord is He that measureth the waters with His fist, and the heavens He weigheth with the palm of His hand."*

The Prophet speaketh here of Thy goodness and mercy by metaphors, which the Scripture is wont many times to use, and how by waters are understood

* Isaias xl. 12.

sorrows, adversities, and tribulations, according to that which David saith in the Psalm, "Save me, O Lord, for the waters have entered even unto my soul."* The holy King speaketh not of these material waters, for that these waters, being corporal, cannot enter into the soul, which is a spirit. But he meaneth that Thou shouldst deliver him from the travails and tribulations wherein he was, which miseries were arrived even to his heart.

Thou, therefore, O Lord, art so good and gracious, saith Isaias, that Thou givest us troubles and punishment with Thy hand closed, for that they are very few, and by measure; but Heaven Thou givest us with open hand, even as one fetcheth it that measureth by spans; for Thou art short and sparing in punishing, but most liberal and magnificent in rewarding us with Thy heavenly benefits, using towards us sinners exceeding great mercies.

Behold then, my soul, open thine eyes, and consider how much thou oughtest to love Him that so much loveth thee, and how ungrateful thou art in offending Him that doth thee so much good; and that in offending so good a Lord thou givest occasion, as much as in thee lieth, that He should suffer greater grief and pain than all that are in hell do suffer. For as thy God and Lord is infinite in His power and goodness, so is He worthy to be infinitely beloved, which no creature is able to do, for that their forces and power are limited. But as the virtue of God is infinite, so doth God love His goodness infinitely, and forasmuch as the grief of the party wronged is as

* Psalm lxviii. 2.

as great as the love that he beareth to himself, it followeth that God shall receive infinite grief, if it were possible for Him to be grieved, when His goodness is offended, and consequently His sorrow infinite, and far greater than all that are in hell do suffer.

Open then, my soul, the eyes of thy understanding, and behold how many moments and hours, days, months, and years, our Lord, of His own great goodness and mercy, hath expected and tarried thee for to turn unto Him. Consider how many men there have been that at the hour of their death would have given all that they had, and all that they were able to make, that it might have pleased God to have lengthened but one day of their life, whereby they might have done penance for their sins, and yet it was not granted them. Oh, how unthankful dost Thou live for all the benefits that Thou receivest of Thy Lord, and especially in the time wherein Thou mightest work so much good. O eternal and wonderful goodness of my God, it is very manifest and apparent that Thou hast neither bounds, nor measure, nor end in suffering such innumerable kinds of sins in men, expecting them with open arms to have mercy upon them if they would take pity of themselves, and would not shut their eyes nor stop their ears to see the benefits and favours that they have received of Thee, and to hear the knocks that Thou givest at the door of their consciences. O blind and deaf souls, how can you suffer to have these your inward senses so stopped as not to hear nor see that which so much importeth your remedy and salvation.

Labour therefore, O my soul, all that ever thou art able for to open thine eyes, and tarry not till death put thee in mind of it, seeing that the remembrance thereof may well awaken thee presently to love thy God and Lord; and leave not this noble work for a time wherein, peradventure, through thy grievous sins past, thou wouldst see thy faults, but shalt not see what way to avoid them.

NINETY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

THAT GOD OUGHT TO BE BELOVED FOR THAT HE IS OUR FAITHFUL FRIEND.

O LORD, how am I beset with causes on every side for to set my love only upon Thee, and yet hardly for all that can my hard heart and rebellious will be brought to the love of Thy infinite goodness. If I love Thee not for that which Thou art in Thyself, yet wherefore do I not love Thee for that which Thou art towards me? I love my friends, and I cast mine eyes, and settle my heart upon them because they do me good, and I know that they wish me well; but I forget Thee and love Thee not, being so great a lover of me, so faithful and loyal a friend, and so bountiful unto me. Never suffer me, O Lord, to forget that liking and strong fidelity that Thou barest to Thy servant David, insomuch that many years after his death Thou, threatening Solomon for the sins which he committed, didst mitigate Thy anger, saying that

Thou wouldst not take away the half of his kingdom in his days for love of Thy servant David.* This love and friendship Thou observest with Thy servants, not only whilst they live but also after they are dead, and when the world hath forgotten them, for Thou didst pardon Solomon the punishment that he deserved for his sins, that he should not see it in his days, having regard to the merits of his father who was now dead.

We are wont to say that those who are dead and passed away have few friends, and there are few to be found like unto Booz, of whom the Scripture saith, that the friendship which he bore to the living he continued after their deaths.† But Thou, O Lord and our God, art such a true and faithful friend to Thy friends that Thou exceedest above measure all that men are able to imagine in the kind of love and friendship, observing an everlasting love and a most firm and faithful friendship both whilst they live and after they are dead. So great care Thou takest of Thy friends' affairs in their absence, that when Agar, Abraham's servant, went wandering, having lost her way in the desert of Bersabee, with her son Ismael, being in danger of death, Thou didst succour them, O Lord, in their tribulation, for the merits of Thy dear friend Abraham, and therefore holy Scripture saith‡ that God heard the voice of the child. It saith not that God heard the voice or lamentation of the mother, but the voice of Ismael, for Thou showest not, O Lord, that favour and miracle of water for any deserts of the mother, but for the merits of Abraham whose son that child was.

* 3 Kings xi. 12. † Ruth ii. 20. ‡ Gen. xxi. 17.

God is merciful in the affairs of His friends, and therefore holy Scripture saith that God made Ismael a great prince for that he was the son of Abraham.* And no less care takest Thou, O Lord, in defending the honour of Thy friends in their absence. Aaron and Mary murmured against their brother Moses, when Thou didst reprehend them, and that very sharply, extolling Thy faithful friend, Moses, with great and unwonted praises.† There are many in the world that make themselves our friends, that are wont in our absence not only not to defend our honour but to help to detract it.

Oh, how faithful a friend art Thou, O Lord, that so defendest the honour of Thy friends. Exceeding honourable are Thy friends, O Lord, and their principality is very much established, and yet for all this we love the false friendship of the world, and do forsake Thee, our great and faithful friend. The people murmured, yea, and were scandalized, at Thy holy and gracious precursor, St. John Baptist, and they accounted him for ignorant and mutable, in that having given clear testimony of Thee to the Gentiles,‡ he sent to know who Thou wert when he was prisoner;§ but St. John that had hazarded his honour for Thy service, and the spiritual good of his disciples, lost it not thereby, for Thou tookest in hand to defend it greatly, praising his constancy and wisdom, and saying that he was not wavering as a reed, nor yet ignorant, who was a prophet and more than a prophet; and thus did he merit to have Thee for preacher of his virtues.

* Gen. xvii. 20. † Numb. xii. 1. ‡ St. John i. 30. § St. Matt. xi. 3.

In like manner didst Thou defend the honour of Mary Magdalene, in the house of Simon the Pharisee, and afterwards in Bethania, when Judas murmured at her for pouring the ointment upon Thee.* Thou defendedst also the honour of Joseph in Egypt,† and of Susanna,‡ and of Thy holy Mother,§ when Joseph her husband would have forsaken her, for an Angel appeared unto him and expelled the imaginations and thoughts that he had in his mind. Whom didst Thou ever fail that trusted in Thee? What friend of Thine didst Thou ever forsake in his necessity? The Children found Thee present to aid them in the furnace of Babylon;‖ Daniel in the lions' den,¶ and Jonas in the belly of the whale.** All men do love a faithful friend, and all do desire not to be forsaken in their troubles and adversities, and Thou being such a one as they desire, yet how few are they, O Lord, for all that who do love Thee? Well, then, although Thou wert not the same that Thou art, which is infinite goodness and our only good, yet in that Thou art so true and faithful a friend, it were meet that we should love Thee above all things.

There is nothing comparable to a faithful friend, and in necessity he is known. Friendship is of greater value than gold or silver, and more precious than precious stones, and therefore, O my God and Lord, seeing I have found Thee so good a friend in all my tribulations, wherefore shall I not love Thee above all things and esteem and make more account of Thy

* St. Luke vii. 40; St. John xii. 7. † Gen. xli. 39.
‡ Dan. xiii. 44. § St. Matt. i. 20. ‖ Dan. iii. 92.
¶ Dan. xiv. 37. ** Jonas ii. 3.

friendship than of all precious jewels? We love our friends dearly and make much account of them; when we know by experience that they are our true friends, they are our delight and pleasure, and unto them we impart our secrets. O Lord and our God, how much ought my heart for to love Thee, how sweet is Thy conversation and how delectable is Thy friendship unto me. Whereby couldst Thou do us greater honour or estimation than by calling us Thy friends? "I have called you My friends," sayest Thou, O Lord, in the Gospel* talking with Thy Apostles.

This name of friendship importeth an equality amongst friends, for when two are very different and unequal in power, riches, dignity, and degree, they are not called friends although they love one another, and it is a very improper kind of speech to say that the King and a shepherd are friends. And what exceeding great goodness is it, then, O Lord, that Thou being God, infinite, eternal, almighty, and Lord both of Heaven and earth, and I being such a vile, seely worm, and miserable creature, and every way subject to so many wants and imperfections, Thou callest me for all that Thy friend and wilt continue friendship with me. "What is man that Thou exaltest him so much, and that Thou settest Thy heart upon him?"† Thou seeing, O Lord, the great disproportion betwixt Thee and man, and that there could not be any friendship betwixt two things so unequal; desiring our friendship, Thou vouchsafest to abase Thyself so far as to become Man and to exalt our human nature, uniting

* St. John xv. 15. † Job vii. 17.

it with Thy Divine Person in one subject and making it so equal unto Thee, that whatsoever is said of Thee as God, is said of Thee being Man by participation of words and titles.

If a King should fall in love with a base beggarly slave, and should marry with her for pure love that he beareth her, this woman that was vile and base before doth now enjoy the honour and sovereignty of a queen and lady. She is called by the title of Majesty, and every way used according to the dignity wherein the King hath placed her. O true lover and King of eternal glory, how strange and beyond all reason hath the love been that Thou hast borne to our human nature, which was the slave and captive of sin, insomuch that Thou determinedst to marry with her in the virginal bride-chamber of Thy Mother's womb; and hast so exalted it, that our humanity is adored in Thee with the adoration of Latria, which is due only to Thy essence and Divine Majesty, for being made the subject of the Divine Word it is one self-same subject and person with it, being God and Man, and Man and God.

Seest thou not then, my soul, that God might well call us His friends, having made our human nature equal unto Him? Seest thou not that He may well call us friends, and that of His divine clemency and infinite goodness He hath given us free leave to call Him friend? Verily, God is our friend and our true friend, and He hath prescribed a wonderful means whereby to be called our friend and to call us friends, to the end that the name of friend which carrieth with it true love and fidelity might melt thy heart and

mollify thy bowels within thee, for to love Him for evermore that hath done so much for to be beloved of thee without having any need at all of thy love.

NINETY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

HOW GOD OUGHT TO BE BELOVED FOR THAT HE IS OUR DEFENCE AND REFUGE.

THE hart being pursued of the hounds, and seeing that he can no ways escape, knowing by an instinct of nature that man is a meek and gentle creature, of his own natural property runneth unto man for succour; and, therefore, I, knowing that Thou art my most merciful and benign Lord, seeing myself persecuted with the enemies of my soul, and that many dogs have beset me on every side, and the counsels and devices of the wicked have assailed me, amongst so many tribulations and adversities of my life, to whom should I run but unto Thee, O most merciful Father, my only refuge and true defence? "God is our refuge and virtue, our helper in tribulations,"* Who hath loved us exceedingly; and how should I seek Thee but by loving Thee, and how should I go but by love, seeing love carrieth me whither and which way soever I go. Even as the sun is the place wherein light is kept and preserved, so Thou, my Redeemer and good Jesus, art the storehouse of consolations and remedies; and wherefore

* Psalm xlv. 2.

then, my God, shall I not love Thee, and run unto Thee by loving Thee, living amidst so many dangers, and Thou being my refuge and comfort?

To serve Thee is to love Thee, for he that loveth Thee not serveth Thee not, and he that loveth Thee serveth Thee, and he that loveth Thee but a little serveth Thee but a little, and he that loveth Thee much serveth Thee much, and he that loveth Thee perfectly serveth Thee perfectly. Like as the hart, O Lord, desireth the fountains of waters, so doth my soul desire to go unto Thee.* My soul enjoying the liberty that by Thy free gift she possesseth, hath many enemies who pursue and persecute her to take her prisoner, sometimes openly with slanders and false accusations of worldly men, whom the different and great diversity of life greatly discontenteth; sometimes they hide themselves with bows and arrows in a covert, privily to wound my heart, covering their treason with some company or business that I think to be safe and sure; and sometimes they lay privy snares of the self-same colour that the grass is, and many times cover sin with the colour of some spiritual exercise, and with this false and counterfeit show it catcheth whosoever walketh not warily and well advised.

This angel of Satan is wont to transform himself into an Angel of light, and therefore David did pray that Thou wouldst deliver him from the devil of noonday,† for he, being darkness, would make us believe that he is light, and that the thing is good whereunto he persuadeth us. There want not dogs

* Psalm xli. 2. † Psalm xc. 6.

to follow the chase; which are many times false brethren, and the external senses, and the inclination of the appetite to temporal goods: and albeit there were no more hurt but their eager bawling, yet were it somewhat painful, and how much more, seeing they carry always somewhat away. And hereupon, of the grief of this present hurt, and of the fear of further damage, ariseth this passionate agony, which letteth to fetch my breath; and other comfort have I none, but to lift up mine eyes and to look upon Thee as the only succour and defence of my miseries and dangers. I have heard the shrill sound and noise of Thy mercies, which flow from Thee as fountains, and, therefore, do I desire Thee, even as the hart desireth the fountains of waters. Thou art fountains; not that there are in Thee divers beginnings, for Thou art one indivisible, but for that the differences and diversities of goods do take their beginnings in Thee.

Out of the earthly Paradise there issued a large river, which afterwards came to be divided into four principal rivers,* and out of every one of them flowed many others; so Thou, O Lord, art a sea of goods, and being but one, dost impart and communicate Thyself after divers manners, without dividing Thyself either into one part or another, but, according to the measure of Thy divine will and wisdom, giving to every one proportionably to the disposition and nature that he is of.

This is the water of life which Thou promisedst to that woman of Samaria.† No marvel, then, if my soul having so great evil near unto it, and so great good

* Gen. ii. 10. † St. John iv. 13.

far off from it, whilst in this vale of misery it remaineth banished from Thy glory, doth desire Thee, seeing Thou art its only refuge and whole remedy. Thou art my refuge and life, and canst help me if Thou pleasest, for Thou art the living God, Whose Providence extendeth to all things, without wanting to any one. Thou being, therefore, our life and our whole succour, we may securely seek for help at Thy hands. I am now under the wings of Thy defence, but the time will come, O Lord, when I shall be in the very refuge and succour of my soul, having my whole felicity before mine eyes, when I shall find Thee as it were in Thy proper mansion-house, and then shall their careful seeking cease, who run crying up and down, "O the Beloved of my soul, where dost Thou take Thy repast? Where dost Thou lie and repose Thyself at noonday?"* No man, O Lord, will then demand me, "Where is thy God?"† Neither shall I go seeking that which shall be always present before mine eyes.

I shall enter into Thy mansion-house, where there are as many lodgings as there shall be persons saved, for in the house of Thy Father there are many mansions,‡ and although one be better than another, for there is one manner of brightness of the moon, another of the sun, and another of the stars, and as every star doth differ from another in clearness, so shall the resurrection be of the dead,§ and yet shall every one for all that be such, that I shall have great reason rather to choose the least and lowest room there, than to live in the habitation of sinners.‖ The

* Cant. i. 6. † Psalm xli. 4. ‡ St. John xiv. 2.
§ 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42. ‖ Psalm lxxxiii. 11.

very refuse of Thy house, O Lord, is more precious than the most precious things of the earth, if that may be called refuse where everything is exquisite and chosen. No marvel, therefore, if the Prophet saith, "O Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house and the place where Thy glory remaineth,"* for, albeit, Thou couldst if it pleased Thee give us the fountain of Thee in all places, yet hast Thou reserved a particular place for that purpose, because it is meet and convenient that the place be answerable to the office that it is used for. The princes of the earth, in their great and sumptuous palaces, are wont to choose out some one part to retire themselves, the which they cause to be more curiously wrought than all the rest. Even so, although the whole palace of this world and of the Heaven be so beautiful, that for to behold it only hath seemed to some sufficient happiness, we believe that in the Heaven called Cœlum Empyreum, Thou hast wrought a special place of retreat for Thyself, where all the best rooms of Thy house are. Hereupon, doth the poor cottage wherein my soul now liveth much grieve and trouble me, knowing well, with the Apostle,† that if this corruptible habitation of ours were once dissolved, we have provided for us a mansion in Heaven, not wrought with hands of men, but by Thine own, which can do all things. It were not less than mere madness to go about to express the greatness of Thy house, the order of those who serve Thee, the furniture and fair proportion of it, the glory of the inhabitants, the magnificence of the Lord and Master; for being so great and wonderful, and all

* Psalm xxv. 8. † 2 Cor. v. 1.

that ever Thou hast made, that Thou far excellest all understanding, yet a Prophet saith that in this alone Thou art magnified.*

If the Queen of Saba did so marvel that she became as it were beside herself, stood mute and amazed when she saw the wisdom of Solomon,† his riches and order of his household, and the manner of his service, what shall it be to see Thy glory and heavenly palace, and the order and marvellous proportion that is in it? Although all that ever Thou dost here on earth be great and wonderful, yet if it be compared with the glorification of the just, we shall see that therein as it were only Thou showest Thyself magnificent; for, albeit Thou be so in all other favours and benefits that Thou bestowest upon them, yet in this more, and above all the rest, dost Thou most specially and particularly show Thyself bountiful. What greater magnificence can there be than to open all Thy treasures, and to give every one that entereth in free liberty to take what he listeth, and to leave the appetite so contented that it can desire no more? Oh, what must the soul needs feel, which, coming out of this vale of tears, doth enter into Thy princely palace, to live in continual wisdom and glory? It will not then say it was deceived in the news that it heard, but will openly before all confess that, "as we have heard so have we seen in the city of the Lord of virtues, in the city of God."‡ It is meet, therefore, O God, that my heart do burn in the flames of heavenly love, seeing Thou art the refuge and everlasting habitation of my soul and my life.

* Isaias xxxiii. 5. † 3 Kings x. 7. ‡ Psalm xlvii. 9.

NINETY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

THAT GOD OUGHT TO BE BELOVED FOR THAT HE IS OUR REFUGE.

THE holy King and Prophet David purposed, O God and our Lord, to love Thee with all his heart, and with all care and fervent zeal, and finding many particular gifts and special favours which he had received at Thy hand that moved him thereunto, he saith in the Psalm, "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength. Our Lord is the firm and sure rock whereon I am built. He is my refuge and deliverer, and in Him I will hope. He is my succour and defender, and the strength of my salvation, and He that receiveth me."* Thou oughtest, O Lord, to be beloved with all our heart, and with firm resolution of mind, and with fervent zeal, seeing Thou bestowest so great and many benefits upon him who standeth in such need of them as man doth. He ought to be earnestly loved Who is our weal, our strength, our refuge, our deliverer, our helper and defender, and the force of our virtue. With how great fervour and zeal ought our will to be inflamed in Thy heavenly love. Run over then, my soul, all these things, one by one, and thou shalt find it true that I say. Man, if we consider well his infirmity and weakness, is miserable in all the course of his life, and frail in all his actions, his care is wholly upon corporal things, neglecting spiritual matters. The soul would perish with any small temptation, and the body likewise decay

* Psalm xvii. 2, 3.

upon any little occasion, if Thou, O Lord, our refuge and our strength, didst not uphold both the one and the other. If God had not holpen me, saith Thy servant David, my soul had been in danger to have dwelt in hell. Well knew Thy holy Apostle that Thou wert his strength, and therefore he said that he was able to do all things in Thee Who dost comfort him.* The knowledge, therefore, of my own weakness and infirmity, and the strength that I find in Thee, ought very much to awaken and stir me up to Thy heavenly love, for in very truth, O Lord, all the virtue and power of man is but sand, and the building founded thereon will hourly fall, but Thou, O Lord, art the strong and sure Rock whereon the foundation of spiritual building is grounded. Who would receive and succour us in our adversity, if God did not open the gates of His mercy, and recollect us within them? He is our refuge. Those who are weak, and chased of their enemies, in fear and not able to resist, have need of a tower of refuge. "Calling unto our Lord, the Lord of my justice heard me."† Thou art a refuge to me in my tribulation. Of the enemies that do daily pursue and assail us, the Apostle saith that they are so mighty that we are not only to wrestle against flesh and blood, but also against the power of the devils, and against the prince of darkness.‡ And Job saith that there is no force upon earth comparable to the force of the devil.§ How much ought I, amidst so many enemies, which cease not day and night to seek the means to destroy me, to desire some

* Phil. iv. 13. † Psalm iv. 2. ‡ Ephes. vi. 12.
§ Job xli. 24.

tower and house of defence to lock me in, and to defend me from their wounds and assaults? And this favour dost Thou show us, O Lord, giving Thyself for a tower of succour and defence, wherein we may be safe from all the dangerous hurts of our enemies, and therefore ought I, O Lord, to cleave unto Thee in my tribulation and temptation, where I shall always find the gates of Thy mercy wide open, and entering in shall be welcomely received, my enemies shall be vanquished, and I get over them a glorious victory. Herein shall I see how much I am bound to love Thee, in that being so often at the point of destruction, and overcome as it were with temptation, Thou hast succoured me with Thy grace and mercy, and delivered me from death everlasting.

O Lord, how greatly am I bound for to love Thee, and how much doth it invite me to Thy love that Thou art my deliverer, my defender, and the tower of refuge in my tribulations and temptations, which so violently drew me from Thee that I had been utterly overcome had not Thy divine goodness succoured me. Love thou, therefore, O my soul, so good a God, Who holdeth open the gates of His strength unto us, that our weakness may enter in and be succoured and defended. Here groweth now a cause of greater love that Thou owest unto God, for it is one thing to be our refuge and another to be our defender. God is our refuge in our flight, that we have not fallen into the hands of our enemies, but to be our deliverer is to take us out of the power of our enemies after that we were taken prisoners. Sometimes, therefore, I consider of Thee, O Lord, as Thou succourest and

gatherest me under Thy wings, and, therefore, will say with the Prophet, "Succour me under the shadow of Thy wings."* Thou hast succoured me with Thy mercy, and prevented me with Thy grace before I fell, even as Thou didst with Thy chosen people of Israel when Pharao, King of Egypt, pursued them, for with Thy strong and mighty hand Thou deliveredst Thy people before the tyrant came near them, or one stroke stricken against them, cutting off his passage, and drowning both him and his whole army in the Red Sea.†

Oh, how often, O Lord, hast Thou done the like with me when the enemy had me in chase and sought to bring my soul to captivity. Thy mercy, my God, forestalled me, and Thy goodness prevented the enemy, and Thy love made the diligent to take Thee by the hand, even before I called unto Thee that I might be succoured by Thee. My heart shall praise Thee, O Lord, for evermore, and my tongue shall not cease to sing with Thy people this preventing grace and favour, saying, "Let us sing unto our Lord, for he hath gloriously magnified himself, the horse and the horseman he hath drowned in the sea."‡ At other times, O Lord, after that I was fallen into the hands of my enemies and taken prisoner, Thou deliveredst me, and didst draw me out of the infernal darkness to the clear light of Thy grace, and to Thy heavenly friendship. "Thou hast sent Thy succour from Heaven, and hast received me, and taken me out of many waters."§ Thou hast delivered me from

* Psalm xvi. 8. † Exodus xiv. 24. ‡ Exodus xv. 1.
§ Psalm xvii. 17.

most strong and mighty enemies, and from such as did hate me deadly. I will willingly sacrifice unto Thee, and will confess Thy name, because it is good,* for Thou hast delivered me from all tribulation. "Thou hast broken my bonds asunder, and I will sacrifice unto Thee a sacrifice of praise."† I will love Thee, therefore, O my God, with holy King David, in that Thou art my refuge and my helper. I find a great sweetness and delectation of love in this word, and it doth vehemently stir up my will to give itself wholly unto Thee, my God.

Thou, O Lord, art our helper, and we are weak and unskilful in the exercise of this spiritual war, and therefore art Thou our helper, that by Thy favour and help we may be able to overcome, for without Thee, as Thou Thyself affirmest, we can do nothing. Thou disposest in such wise, and orderest in such sort the favour that Thou showest us, that Thou bestowest the profit and commodity of the victory upon us, and crownest Thy gifts in us, as though the works which are worthy of praise and reward proceeded of our own virtue and strength only. What made holy Job such and so excellent? Thy goodness surely, and the good use of free will by this holy man, and yet, for all that Thy grace was the chief and principal, and that it proceeded from Thy holy hand, Thou ceasest not to praise him and to publish his virtues before Thy holy Angels, and in the presence of Satan, his mortal enemy. All these things distil from their fountain, which is the great love that Thou bearest us, and whereas love procureth to make all the benefits that

* Psalm liii. 8. † Psalm cxv. 16, 17.

one bestoweth on his love peculiar and proper, Thou praisest them, O our God, and crownest them, as though man of his natural condition and by his own free will, without Thy grace and help, had gotten them. Now do I plainly see whereunto I must stick, for to be succoured in my necessity, and that with such honour, that for the victorious work which with such a helper I shall work, I shall be magnified and crowned. This favour and strength that Thou givest, O Lord, unto Thy servants, is so great that David, being inflamed in Thy holy love, compareth it to the horns of a bull, which tosseth into the air with victory that which they strike and lay hold of. I have loved Thee, O Lord, Who art "the horn," that is the strength "of my salvation,"* for without Thee I had not had the power to defend me from mine enemies, and much less to overcome and destroy them. The like kind of speech he useth also in another place. In Thee, and in Thy power and virtue, we will scatter and disperse our adversaries, by means of all these gracious favours and liberal gifts which I know do proceed of Thy bountiful hand and sovereign charity. I purpose, O Lord, to love Thee with all my strength and with all my will and power. All these lift up my understanding, and give me cause to consider upon what goodness I ought to bestow my love, and teach me that seeing Thou, my God, art infinite goodness, in Whom I find all that is necessary for my eternal salvation, I should addict my will wholly unto Thee, and bestow and employ my whole entire love upon Thee only.

* Psalm xvii. 3.

NINETY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

THAT GOD OUGHT TO BE BELOVED BECAUSE HE IS OUR DELIVERER.

AMONGST many other names and titles that holy King David singeth of Thee, our God and our Lord, this is one, that he calleth Thee our deliverer, for of Thine infinite goodness and unspeakable mercy, Thou hast vouchsafed to deliver us from all our evils, and that at so great cost of Thy honour and life, that Thou sparedst not to lose it for to deliver us from our sins, and from the pains that thereby we deserved.

See, therefore, now, O Lord, whether I am not bound for to love Thee, being as Thou art, my mercy, my refuge, and my Redeemer. When an elephant falleth into a deep pit out of which he cannot escape, he loveth the hunter that delivereth him and plucketh him forth of it, and followeth and obeyeth him. If a brute beast do that, being a creature that wanteth the use of reason, what ought I then to do that am created to Thine own image and likeness, and endowed with reason and understanding. Thou, my God and Lord, being He that hath drawn me out of the pit of sin, and hath delivered me from the snares of the devil, wherefore should I not love and follow such a noble benefactor? "He hath broken the snare, and we are set free. Our hope is in the name of our Lord, Who hath made Heaven and earth."* If Thou be our deliverer, it proceedeth of the great love that Thou

* Psalm cxxiii. 7, 8.

bearest us, according to that which Thou saidst by the mouth of the Prophet Jeremias, "I have loved thee in perpetual charity, and therefore have drawn thee unto Me, having mercy upon thee." * The love that Thou bearest us is perpetual, and this is the root of our salvation, and through this love Thou hast drawn us out of sin, and hast set open unto us the gate of Paradise, and hast embraced us, being poor and weak. Unto Thee as to another David, resort all such as are indebted and of sorrowful heart, and in Thee they find safety and sure defence, for Thou makest those the children of God that were slaves of the devil, and settest those free and at liberty that were condemned by the law. Upon Thee, O Lord, we ought for to look, and upon Thee only to set our eyes, as upon our faithful friend and deliverer from our evils, that the waters of our sins may not trouble us and dazzle our sight, and throw us headlong into desperation, as men that pass over a river and look upon the sky or on the bank.

"My soul is troubled within me, and therefore will I remember Thee." † In Thee only, O Lord, it hath life and rest, and in Thee alone it findeth security and quietness, and everything besides Thee, O Lord, is infirmity unto me. Thou art the true health which, as a good shepherd, bindeth that which is broken, healeth that which is sick, and preserveth that which is whole and sound. Thou givest me power and strength against mine enemy, Thou curest the deadly wounds of my sins, and if there be any goodness within me, Thou cherishest it and conservest it. Thou, O Lord, art

* Jer. xxxi. 3. † Psalm xli. 7.

He Who saith by a Prophet, "I will seek the lost, and bring home the strayed; I will bind up the broken, strengthen the weak and diseased, and both the fat and feeble I will keep and preserve, and will feed them in judgment."* Thou, O Lord, art the health of our infirmities, the city of mine exile and banishment, the tower of refuge in my tribulation, and the rest and ease of all my travails. In Thee and by Thee I live, and by Thy mighty power and virtue I have been a thousand times delivered, revived, and raised from the gates of death. With a loud voice that may sound up even to Heaven, I will confess, I will confess that Thou art "the health of my face."† Thy divine and heavenly love containeth in it a sweetness to delight and mollify thee, O my soul, and I have called thy God the health of my face. The face of a man is the highest part of the soul, which groweth sick when it stoopeth unto the love of creatures, and waxeth whole when it lifteth up itself aloft unto the Creator, and with the brightness of His divine countenance it remaineth glorified; whereby we may see upon how good cause and great reason that ancient benediction of the priest in the Old Law was grounded, which said,‡ "Our Lord bless thee and keep thee, and show thee His face, and have mercy upon thee: our Lord turn His face unto thee, and give thee peace." Hereby liveth our soul, when our Lord turneth His face unto ours, not that there is any change or alteration in His, but because the amendment of ours consisteth in the favour of His grace,

* Ezech. xxxiv. 16. † Psalm xli. 12; xlii. 6.
‡ Numb. vi. 24—26.

wherein He is said to turn His face unto ours. Disquiet not thyself, O my soul, but hope in our Lord, for He is thy deliverer.* Thou mayest find Him alone and at leisure at all hours that thou wilt resort unto Him, and that not only to hear but to talk with thee, if thou understand Him, to help thee if thou call unto Him, to succour thee if thou fly unto Him, and to deliver thee if thou seek for help at His hands. The water that springeth from a high head, the more one striveth to stop the course the more violently it riseth, as we see by experience in the conduit pipes of fountains. This spring of lively water which rippleth in my heart hath its head and first rising in Thee, O Lord, Who art the most high beginning of all things, and if our enemy would seek to stop it, it mounteth more and more towards life everlasting, and, therefore, the more that inward affections grow upon us, and the greater assaults and sharper conflicts that we have outwardly, the stronger doth the soul wax against them, and not only taketh unto it courage and valour, but also bursteth out, and letteth loose the reins to her desires, that they may run unto Thee, her deliverer and refuge. And as the children of Israel, when they were most afflicted by the Egyptians were then most multiplied,† and as the ark of Noe,‡ the deeper the waters grew the higher and more aloft it would rise, so now, to such as are endued with Thy grace there is no labour that more availeth than troubles and persecution. Then do they draw most nigh unto Thee, and do know Thee to be their deliverer and Redeemer, and then do

* Psalm cxliii. 2. † Exodus i. 12. ‡ Gen. vii. 18.

they call upon Thee, acknowledging Thee to be their only defence and refuge.

The Prophet Jonas being afflicted and cast into the sea, knowing well, O Lord, that Thou art called the deliverer from troubles, cried out and called upon Thee in his tribulation, saying, "I have called upon our Lord in my tribulation, and He hath heard me out of the belly of the whale. I called upon Him, and He heard my voice."* The like did David, being persecuted of Saul, and when Saul's army on a time had besieged him on a mountain and environed him round about† as with a ring, Thou, O Lord, didst deliver him; for the Philistines at the very same time, through Thy holy ordinance, and by permission of Thy divine providence, entered into his country; whereupon Saul was forced to raise his siege and David was delivered, who called upon Thee, Thou executing herein Thy office of deliverer, which Thou art, from all our evils and troubles. Thou deliveredst Enoch and Elias from the common death of the world;‡ Thou deliveredst just Noe from the waters of the Deluge,§ and Abraham from the Chaldeans; Thou deliveredst Lot from his troubles,‖ and Isaac from the hands of his father Abraham;¶ Thou deliveredst Lot from the fire of Sodom, and Thy people of Israel from the hand of the Egyptians;** Thou deliveredst Daniel from the lions' den,†† and the three Children from the burning furnace and from the power of the tyrant;‡‡ Thou deliveredst

* Jonas ii. 3. † 1 Kings xxiii. 26. ‡ Gen. v. 24; 4 Kings ii. 11.
§ Gen. vii. 23. ‖ Gen. xix. 16. ¶ Gen. xxii. 12.
** Exodus xiv. 28. †† Dan. xiv. 39. ‡‡ Dan. iii. 93.

Susanna from the false witness borne against her, being condemned to death,* and deliveredst David from the hands of Goliath† and from the persecution of Saul, King of Israel; Thou deliveredst St. Peter from the prison of Herod,‡ and St. Paul from the storm of the sea,§ being even at the point to be drowned.

O our Redeemer, most mighty and strong, who is able to express the evils from which Thou hast delivered us, and the tender love wherewith Thou hast drawn us forth from the depth of misery whereunto we were fallen? Thou sendest us troubles, to cause us to seek Thee, and to the end that calling upon Thee, we may know that Thou art our deliverer, and may see the immeasureable love that Thou bearest us, and love Thee Whom there is so great cause and reason to be beloved of us. The good and virtuous have called upon Thee in their tribulations, and Thou hast delivered them from the dangers wherein they stood; and to this end hast Thou sent them tribulations, that they might call upon Thee. Trees of sweet savour, the more that they are shaken of the wind, the more they cast forth their pleasant smell, and the more that the wind of tribulation shaketh the soul wherein are grafted divine and heavenly plants, the more doth the sweet smells of her desires and pleasant savour of her prayers mount up unto Heaven.

Hereupon, as I think, it is said in the Book of Canticles on Thy part, "Arise thou northern wind,

* Dan. xiii. 44. † 1 Kings xvii. 50. ‡ Acts xii. 17. § Acts xxvii. 24.

and come thou southern wind, blow upon My orchard, that it may cast forth sweet savours."* Thus was it at the beginning when the Church was established, and then did this garden yield forth true and perfect savours, flourishing with red roses of martyrdom and white lilies of virginity and of a pure conscience, and violets of heavenly meditations. The wind of persecution blew upon the church, which tyrannical princes raised against Thy elect and chosen garden, and it brought forth odoriferous flowers of examples of Saints, who with their patient suffering in troubles and adversities, and with their perseverance in virtue, yielded a most sweet and pleasant scent unto Thy holy Church.

And so fareth it with every just man in particular at this present, who never showeth his valour so much as when he seeth his virtue most oppressed. O happy evil, that may be the beginning of so great good! And surely Thou, O Lord, wouldst never have suffered any evil in the world, hadst Thou not intended to reap some good thereof. How had we either known the great faith of the most faithful Patriarch Abraham, and of the Centurion in the New Testament, and of the woman of Canaan, whose faith is much commended in Holy Scripture, if they had not been tempted and afflicted? How had we known that Thou art the deliverer from our evils, if we had not found ourselves first fallen into them? We know, O Lord, Thy most high and mighty power, and the great love that Thou bearest us, in that Thou hast delivered us from so many evils, and therefore it is

* Cant. iv. 16.

meet that I love thee for evermore, seeing Thou art my refuge and deliverer and jointly my whole and all my good.

NINETY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

HOW GOD OUGHT TO BE BELOVED, BECAUSE HE IS OUR FULNESS AND SATIETY.

THOU hast given us, O Lord, a taste in receiving our meat, because Thou sawest it necessary for the conservation of our being and sustentation of our corporal life, which cannot without food be maintained, nor the food be received into the stomach, but that it must pass by the taste. In like manner, O my God and my Lord, to the end that my soul may live, Thou hast caused a kind of hunger in my heart and a desire and longing of my soul after Thee, which Thou wouldst should not be able to find satiety or fulness in any other thing but in Thee. The Prodigal Child may be witness hereof, who being out of his father's house, was like to die of hunger,* and this hunger he could never slake until he returned to his father whom he had forsaken, and there he found satiety and contentment. My soul, being severed from Thee, wandereth hungry through the world, seeking to satisfy her desire with the filthy delights of the flesh, the very meat of sin. Even this vile food is denied her, for all is but hunger and misery, according to the noble desire and appetite that Thou hast

* St. Luke xv. 16.

placed in her. Her capacity is great, and the desire which she hath unto Thee, Who art her food, is her appetite, which all things created are not able to fill and satisfy. Now art Thou my food and maintenance here on earth, and hereafter Thou shalt be my satiety in Heaven, when I shall see and behold Thee without veil or cover, and shall have the fruition of Thy divine essence, according to that which the holy Prophet saith, talking with Thee: "I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear."*

The meats of this world do torment the naughty conscience of the wicked, and after shall receive torments eternal; but he who cometh unto Thee, O Lord, and sitteth at Thy table, setteth him down thereat with a hungry appetite, which he hath after Thee, and there is he admitted to the sweetness of the hidden manna,† and coming with this hungry desire, the guest cannot choose but have great pleasure and contentment when he is set at the table. For this feast Thou commandest, O most Sovereign Good Man of the house, that fat calf to be killed which was the very best in all the house; for this banquet was ordained the glorious Incarnation and precious death of Thine only-begotten Son; for this were the bulls and birds of so great price killed, whereof is mention made in the parable of the holy Gospel.‡ Verily, O Lord, if the hunger that my soul hath after Thee be great, exceeding much greater shall the feast be whereof it is written, "The Lord of hosts will make a banquet for all people on this mountain, a banquet of fat and

* Psalm xvi. 15. † Apoc. ii. 17. ‡ St. Matt. xxii. 4.

substantial meats, delicate and profitable."* All which words do plainly show and express the greatness as well of Him that maketh the feast, Who is the Lord of Hosts, as of them that are invited, for it shall be universal for all comers. And our Lord will wipe away the tears from their eyes;† and, therefore, very rightly speaketh he who saith that felicity is a conveying together of all goods. This food will make them immortal, and will give them life everlasting, and therefore saith the Wise Man, "It is the tree of life to such as can climb unto it, and blessed are they that can attain it."‡ This saith Solomon, speaking of the divine wisdom, in contemplation whereof consisteth the greatest part of this banquet. As the tree of life, if the state of innocency had continued,§ had been the cause of life immortal by means of Thy divine favour and grace, which had been the principal cause; even so in that heavenly kingdom, this banquet shall make the blessed Saints immortal, and after a sort eternal, for they shall be so turned and transformed into Thee, the Sovereign Good, that they shall participate of Thy immortality, and be no more subject to change or alteration.

And there is great difference between this feast and all others, for in other banquets the meat is changed into him that eateth it, and here the meat altereth the eater into it, whereupon a Prophet saith, "That all they shall be turned that sit under His shadow."‖ There is no voice heard but of joy and rejoicing. The heavenly wine comforteth the heart, and the food

* Isaias xxv. 6. † Apoc. vii. 17; xxi. 4. ‡ Prov. iii. 18.
§ Gen. ii. 9; iii. 22. ‖ Osee xiv. 8.

strengtheneth the breast, and so cleareth the throat, that the voice of their joys may be heard, from whence they show forth what they feel, and do confess Thy wonders, and the greatness of Thy benefits; and as the matter whereof they treat is infinite, so shall their confession be without end. O heavenly music and songs well composed, how round must they needs go, and what a quick and skilful care must the Master of the choristers have that directeth them, seeing that the voices, being so many and so different, that St. John, in the Apocalypse, saith, they are, as it were, the noise of many waters;* they make, for all that, so sweet and concordant harmony. "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, for they shall praise Thee for evermore:"† a voice of joy and of health in the habitations of the just. This is that sweet song whereof a Prophet maketh mention, saying that those that shall enter into the holy city shall hear a song as of a feast, and a solemnity of great joy and gladness.‡

O our satiety and fulness, O most divine food of our souls, when will the day come that my soul shall sit at that most richly furnished table, and taste of that heavenly food and music of Thy glory? "My soul doth desire Thee in the night,"§ for not being able patiently to endure the darkness and obscurity of this life, she longeth to be with Thee, and to enjoy the light of Heaven. I am now fed and maintained with the reversions that come from that table. For as those children that were brought up in Babylon to be

* Apoc. xiv. 2. † Psalm lxxxiii. 5. ‡ Isaias xxx. 29.
§ Isaias xxvi. 9.

afterwards in presence before the King Nabuchodonosor, were fed with a portion of meat from the King's table, to the end that being well brought up, and beautiful without blemish, they might remain in presence of the King; even so they that will see Thee, O Lord, in Heaven, and mean to be worthy of Thy presence, it is requisite that when they enter into Heaven, they be void of all manner of imperfection, and free from all filthiness of sin, and that they be brought up from henceforth and nourished here in this exile in Babylon with those heavenly meats, with the reversions of Thy grace, which descend from Heaven into our souls. I ought to nourish and maintain myself here on earth if I will worthily see Thee in glory. Those that are brought up with vile and gross meats, are not to appear before Thee in Thy bliss; such are thrust out of the palaces of Nabuchodonosor as clowns that stink of garlic, and therefore it is meet that I maintain myself with the bread of Heaven, if I will be one of Thy heavenly court, and of the number of the courtiers who serve and attend upon Thee in everlasting mansions. This is that princely dainty meat that King David sent from his table to his faithful servant Urias;* these are the spiritual tastes and divine consolations wherewith Thou cherishest Thy servants in this world, as with the reversions of Thy most abundant stores of meats which are eaten there at the table of Thy glory. With what was Elias maintained forty days and forty nights, but with the bread which Thy holy Angel ministered unto him; and with that he came to Thy holy

* 2 Kings xi. 8.

mountain called Horeb.* "Our Lord doth govern me," singeth the Prophet,† or as another translator hath, "Our Lord doth feed me, and nothing shall be wanting unto me." Worldly men want food, and they shall suffer hunger like dogs, and shall run round about the city;‡ but he, O Lord, whom Thou feedest, shall want nothing, for he shall be full and satisfied, being maintained by Thee. I will put myself in the pasture of His glory, and in the fertile and high mountain of Israel,§ where I shall see my God, and He shall carry me upon the waters of refection, filling mine appetite, and satisfying my desire, feeding upon that heavenly bread which descended from Heaven, and is the life and satiety of our souls.

* 3 Kings xix. 8. † Psalm xxii. 1. ‡ Psalm lviii. 7.
§ Ezech. xxxiv. 14.

NINETY-NINTH MEDITATION.

HOW WE OUGHT TO LOVE GOD IN THE BEHALF AND IN RESPECT OF HIS CREATURES.

THERE are so many reasons to move me to love Thee, O my God and the sweetness of my soul, that albeit I would not lift up mine eyes unto Heaven to call to mind Who Thou art, and Thy infinite and wonderful perfections, yet if I look down upon the earth, and behold the whole world that Thy divine hands created of nothing, even here shall my soul find great cause for to love Thee, for she can turn her on no side without seeing Thy marvellous works. In respect of the creatures I ought for to love Thee, seeing all of them do serve Thee with the best that they have, and in the best sort that they are able, and do greatly obey Thee, and therefore ought I likewise, by the example of other creatures far inferior to myself, to serve Thee after the best manner that I am able, and to give Thee the best thing that I possess, which is my love.

Seest thou not, O my soul, that a tree directeth all the works to one principal work, which is to bring forth fruits for the use of man? In like manner ought I, O Lord, to order and dispose all my works to one chief work, and to yield that unto Thee, my God, as the tree giveth me the best that it hath. The best work that I can do, and the best fruit that I can give Thee, is for to love Thee. Thou comparest us in the Gospel to the trees, amongst which those trees which bringeth not forth to the Master good fruit, in giving

their love, which is the fruit that Thou requirest at our hands, shall be cut down and thrown into hell fire.* All other Thy creatures do serve Thee, O Lord, with all their strength continually night and day, and in fair and foul weather, and so will I love Thee, my God and my Maker, with all my power and force, by day and night, in prosperity and adversity. The creatures do serve me only, and that of their own natural inclination, and so ought I likewise to serve and love Thee of mine own free will. The creatures serve me in their gifts in the greatest perfection that they are able, and if they give them not so, I refuse and will not take them. For I require of my tree fruit that is thoroughly ripe, sound, sweet, seasonable, and perfect, and when it yieldeth not forth such fruit, I do cut it up by the root for the fire. Even so will I endeavour for to give Thee, my God, my love, which is the fruit due unto Thee, thoroughly ripe, sweet, sound, and perfect, and at all times, for this fruit cometh in season at all times. The creatures serve not me with fraud, sloth, nor dissimulation, but simply and with diligent attention. Even so ought I for to serve and love Thee without deceit and sluggishness. Of all that ever Thou hast made and created, O Lord, I am to take instruction how I ought for to serve Thee. In all of them I see Thy infinite power and wisdom shining. In every one of them I find Thee present, for Thou fillest all things with Thy presence, as Thou Thyself affirmest in Holy Scripture; neither is the centre of the earth furthest off from Thee, nor the heaven nearest unto Thee,† although Thy effects

* St. Matt. vii. 19. † Jer. xxiii. 23, 24.

be different in different places, Thou art wholly in every place, and everything is in Thy presence. Hell lieth wide open before Thy face, and the place of perdition is not hidden from Thee, although it be far different from Thy holy habitation. All things are naked and lie wide open to Thy sight. I feel even now sometimes Thy presence when Thou withholdest me from my wicked ways, and directest me in good. I feel Thy heavenly favour and grace, and that Thou art my deliverer, and I hear sometimes that sweet voice of Thine which awaketh me out of my sleep, and giveth me new breath of life. But it fareth with me as Moses said to the people, "You have heard His voice, but His face you have not seen.* I see the works of Thine hands, and yet, being so great and beautiful as they are, I cannot know by them all the beauty of Thy feet, and much less the fairness of Thy face. Thou being immutable, dost pass so swiftly through these things, that the Prophet saith Thou walkest upon the sea, and upon the deep waters thereof Thou leavest paths.†

Thou art so great without quantity, and so infinite without end and measure that the "heaven is Thy seat and the earth Thy footstool."‡ By these things that Thou hast created I come to find out and know what Thou art, even here, now that I cannot behold Thy presence in this life, for no mortal man shall see Thee and live in the world.§ And albeit Thou art my God of eternal majesty, my life and most omnipotent Lord, and I Thy seely creature which Thou createdst

* Deut. iv. 12. † Psalm lxxvi. 20. ‡ Isaias lxvi. 1.
§ Exodus xxxiii. 20.

of nothing; yet such is Thy goodness and mercy that for so many and infinite benefits whereby man is bound unto Thee, Thou wouldst not for all that bind him to any painful thing, but only that he should love Thee, which is a sweet, pleasant and most delectable office.

Here, then, do I see now Thy great goodness, seeing Thy will and pleasure is that the very obligation wherein man is bound for to love Thee, should be converted only to his profit and commodity: for although Thou lovest us and desirest our love, yet dost Thou it not for any profit to Thyself, for Thou standest in need of nothing, but Thou dost it to this end, that man by loving Thee might be enriched with true riches and reap thereby great commodity, and so grow very wealthy. Man standeth in great need of two things, the one to live and to conserve his being, and the other to live well and to conserve his well being. By the service of creatures, which naturally serve man, man conserveth his being, but by the profitable service of love, which man of his own free will yieldeth voluntarily unto Thee, O Lord and our God, he receiveth a good being and a most profitable being, and by persevering in Thy divine love, he conserveth his good being, which is the state of grace. And as the service of creatures is continually needful unto man, so the service and love which man oweth unto Thy Divine Majesty ought to be most continual, if he will have his good state, which is the state of grace, continue and persevere in him. And as I should be forced to die, if the creatures should deny me the service that they owe me, so must I needs die

spiritually in my soul, if I yield not to Thee, O Lord, as to my Creator, the service and love that I owe; for if the life of my mortal body depend upon the service of creatures, and this service failing in them, my life straightway faileth in me, so the life of my soul, being grounded and maintained in Thy service by love, this love decaying in me, my soul must presently needs decay and die spiritually. Whereupon I conclude that he who loveth not Thee is dead in very deed; and therefore the service that man receiveth of creatures doth nothing profit and avail him if he for his part do not first love Thee. And thereupon, likewise, it followeth that when the creatures serve me, and I serve not Thee, they all lose their service and are deprived of the profit of their labours, because they attain not to the end wherefore they were created; and had they the use of reason they would all of them rise and rebel against man and deny him their service. And the same man, O Lord, who loveth not Thee, perverteth and overthroweth, as much as in him lieth, the order of all things, and is unworthy to receive the smallest service in the world of any of the least creatures.

It is meet, therefore, O Lord, that I love Thee that I may deserve the service of the creatures which have no other means to come unto Thee but by serving me when I do serve Thee. And therefore when I love Thee and am as I ought to be, all creatures join unto Thee and attain unto the end of their creation. I for Thee, and the creature for me. When I am not as I ought to be, I confound and destroy all, and pervert all that ever is created by Thee, but when I

love Thee with that love which I ought to do, I link and repair all things, and do unite and conserve the whole world. Wherefore, as when I love Thee I deserve to have all things to serve me, and all of them do join together and come unto Thee; so contrariwise, when I love Thee not, I am worthy to have them deny me their service and to rebel against me, according to that which is written, "The compass of the earth shall fight against fools."* O sweet and marvellous circle, whereby is showed that when man loveth Thee, he is a mediator betwixt Thee and Thy creatures, for in loving Thee they return by man unto their Creator, but he that loveth Thee not, is unworthy to be called Thy creature.

HUNDREDTH MEDITATION.

OF THE GLORY THAT THEY SHALL OBTAIN WHO LOVE GOD.

AMONGST the exceeding great and sovereign favours that Thou usest towards us Thy servants, most bountiful and most magnificent Lord, this is one of all others most special and most marvellous, that Thy divine liberality bestoweth on us glory and rest everlasting, for so small services as we owe unto Thee and for so short travails as we pass for Thee in this temporal and transitory life. Surely, as the Apostle saith, "The passions of this life are not worthy to obtain the glory revealed unto us."† But so great is

* Wisdom v. 21. † Rom. viii. 18.

Thy goodness and mercy that Thou dost promise us life everlasting if we will love Thee. When that doctor of law came unto Thee and demanded what he should do to obtain life everlasting, Thou answeredst him, that he should "love God above all things, and his neighbour as himself." * Behold, O Lord, how Thou wilt reward our love with Thy glory and rest eternal. If this, therefore, cannot move me, O my God and my Creator, that Thou art as Thou art, nor so great benefits as I daily receive of Thee, nor so many and divers favours as both Heaven and earth, and all the elements do yield unto me, yet why moveth me not at leastwise to Thy love so great a reward as I hope for? I am ashamed that mere secular men do exceed and excel me in their desires. What will not a worldly man suffer for a short delight of the flesh which passeth away like smoke, and leaveth the conscience disquiet and tormented? What will not a covetous man do for a little gain which he must shortly forsake and leave behind him, will he, nill he? What will a malicious man attempt for a vain point of honour which perhaps may cost him his life? And I who by taking no greater pains, but only to love, may obtain the glory which Thou hast prepared for me, yet for all that will not love Thee. If this cannot move me to Thy love, that Thou art as Thou art, infinite goodness and the supreme felicity, nor the love that Thou bearest me, the favours Thou hast showed me, nor the infinite benefits that I have received at Thy hands; yet, at least, let the bliss eternal move me, which is infinite glory, that Thou hast promised to such as love Thee,

* St. Luke x. 27.

where I shall enjoy the blessed sight of Thy divine essence, and never be able for to lose Thee.

The reward of those who love Thee is to reign. Love and reign. What thing is there more easy than to love? And what thing again more glorious than to reign? "Neither eyes have seen, nor ears have heard, neither hath it entered into the heart or understanding of man, what God hath prepared for those who love Him."* When the Queen of Saba beheld the glory of Solomon's house, the decent apparel of his servants, the order of his service, and the sumptuous fare at his table, she was amazed and not able to speak a word, and thought herself deceived, for that all she had heard was far less, and nothing comparable to that which there she saw.† And what will it be then, my God and my Lord, when my soul shall behold Thee face to face, and shall enter into that celestial palace of Thy glory, and shall hear that angelical music? No man is able to express it, and therefore Thy holy Apostle saith that he was forbidden to utter that which he there saw,‡ because all that he was able to say was so little that it might be an occasion for some to make less account of it who are not able to conceive and understand such high matters.

Then they who love Thee shall be drunken with the plenty of Thy house, and as it were a river of delight shall run in at their mouths,§ preparing upon the mount of eternity a banquet of fat tender meats and delicate dishes,‖ that shall be made ready that

* 1 Cor. ii. 9; Isaias lxiv. 4. † 3 Kings x. 7.
‡ 2 Cor. xii. 4. § Psalm xxxv. 9. ‖ Isaias xxv. 6.

they may enter into the joy of their Lord,* and there the people sitting down, who have loved their God in beauty of peace, the King will come amongst them and serve them.† We now see here as in a glass, and in a dark manner, but then we shall see Thee face to face as Thou art. We know Thee now in part, but then I shall know Thee as I am known,‡ that is perfectly, as I am known of Thee. When Thou shalt appear we shall be like unto Thee, and shall see Thee as Thou art.§ In Thy light we shall see light,‖ and we shall see the King in His beauty.¶ Thou art all face and countenance, and Thou shalt not in Heaven have those shoulders which Thou turnedst to Moses in the mountain,** so that in seeing Thy face I shall see Thee all, and Thou being infinite I shall see infiniteness. Oh, how wide shall mine eyes be stretched, seeing they shall be sufficient to see and behold Thy infinite Deity. There shall we see all the good that Thou saidst Thou wouldst show unto Moses,†† where the soul shall drink of the fountain of life,‡‡ and in the light of God shall see its light, where the essence of God is its image and likeness, and where God is that copious reward promised to Abraham and all just men.§§ There is here great sweetness hidden for those who serve God,‖‖ and infinite treasures laid up for good men,¶¶ where all the blessed Saints shall see and enjoy that only

* St. Matt. xxv. 21. † St. Luke xii. 37.
‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 12. § 1 St. John iii. 2. ‖ Psalm xxxv. 10.
¶ Isaias xxxiii. 17. ** Exodus xxxiii. 23.
†† Exodus xxxiii. 19. ‡‡ Psalm xxxv. 10. §§ Gen. xv. 1.
‖‖ Psalm xxx. 20. ¶¶ Wisdom vii. 14.

and supreme felicity. There shall God wipe away all the tears of His Saints, where there shall be no death, nor weeping, nor clamour, nor any more grief or sorrow.*

Oh, how lovely are Thy habitations, my God and Lord of virtues, my soul fainteth for desire to enter into Thy house.† Thy sight will recollect all my thoughts, and gather together my whole strength, that I may entirely employ myself upon. For this shall be no small part of blessedness, to see that the least hair of my head shall not perish,‡ nor that there shall be nothing in me unrewarded. A Prophet saith that the glory of our Lord is that I be never distracted, but live always wholly in Him, in Whom I shall have a better and more happy state than in myself. Everything here on earth is but a painted shadow, which soon vanisheth, but Thy beloved disciple saith, "Now are we the children of God, and yet see we not what we shall be. But when He shall appear we shall be like unto God, for we shall see Him as He is."§ We see not now what we shall be, but when our Lord shall show His face then shall we have a true and perfect brightness, when we shall see Him as He is. It were enough for to find myself, but much more for to find Thee and all things with Thee. In Thee a most clear glass without spot, and image of the goodness of God and light eternal,‖ is showed what Thou art; and such is Thy image that nothing can represent it but Thyself.¶ In Thee appeareth the brightness of

* Apoc. vii. 17; xxi. 4. † Psalm lxxxiii. 2, 3.
‡ St. Luke xxi. 18. § 1 St. John iii. 2. ‖ Wisdom vii. 26.
¶ Heb. i. 3.

Thy glory, the natural sun, and that fire of divine love which eternally proceedeth from Thee and Thy Son. I will enter into the powers of our Lord,* and I will call to mind Thy only justice, and I will behold that immeasurable virtue which moveth all things, and is not weary, and that wisdom which keepeth all in good order,† and that goodness which imparteth itself to all men in Thee, as the Universal Cause. I shall see the essence and being of all Thy creatures more perfect than in themselves, for in Thee remaineth the original pattern, out of which they were drawn and taken, and in the end I shall perfectly see all that which now I believe, and shall have present before my face all that now I desire, and shall there stay immoveable, and remaining firmly in Thee, shall see the change and alteration of all other things, and shall be void of all fear, lest time should consume my so great felicity, for I shall enjoy Thy eternity. He were a fool that should say he had spoken much of Thy glory, and would not confess that he had spoken nothing in respect of that which might be said. My tongue, O Lord, talketh of Thee, because I have no other means to satisfy my desire, but to keep and observe the respect that is due unto Thy glory. My understanding humbleth itself, and casting her eyes downwards, saith that it is not able to endure so great brightness, and that if it think and talk of Thee, it is not with intent to comprehend what Thou art, but to inflame the will the more in Thy flame, the heat whereof is now somewhat felt, and the clear light whereof shall be seen in Thy Kingdom, enjoying

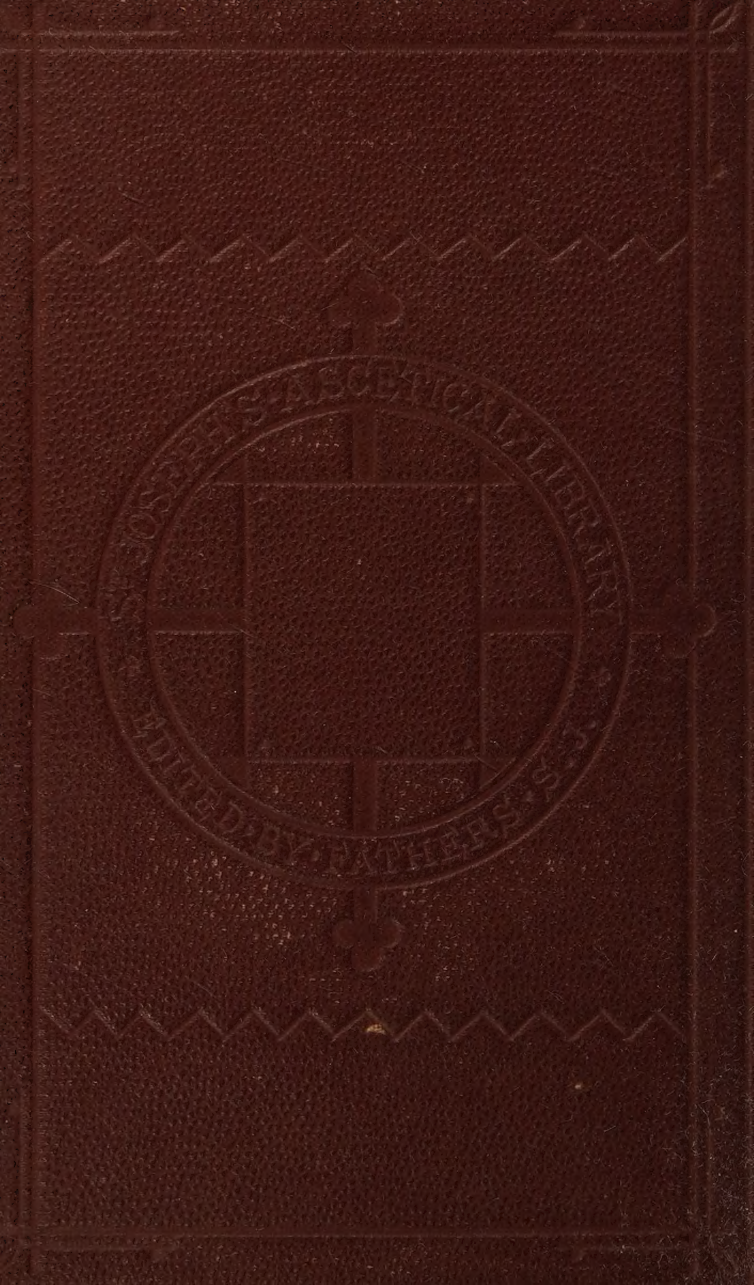
* Psalm lxx. 16. † Wisdom viii. 14.

Thee amongst those Angelical Hierarchies, and multitude of Thy Elect, in that eternal bliss and celestial Jerusalem, which is Thy glory, where Thou livest and reignest for evermore. Amen.

LAUS DEO.

PRINTED BY JAMES STANLEY, ROEHAMPTON.

246.722
S089
44510
SOUTHWELL, S. J., ROBERT, BL.
AUTHOR
A Hundred Meditations on
TITLE
the Love of God.
DATE LOANED | BORROWER'S NAME | ROOM NUMBER
9-3-57 Chernesky 127
Braus
Hagemann
Adler
FEB
Med. Phil
JUL 27
44510


ST JOSEPH'S CATECHETICAL LIBRARY
EDITED BY FATHERS